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MAY 3, 1985

WOMEN AND SPIRITUALITY

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After El Salvador's election
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The world's biggest debtor
JORDAN BISHOP

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Correspondence

On these happy shores

St. Cloud, Minn.

To the Editors: Thank you for the excellent editorial ["Which Revolution?" February 22] comparing the president's State of the Union Address with the bishops' pastoral letter. Should not the bishops make the comparison explicit in subsequent drafts?

I welcome the bishops' endorsement of a social democratic political perspective. But I would also welcome an insistence, against the puffery of "democratic capitalism" now in vogue, on some essential *conservative* truths. These include the fact that change, however just, necessary, or inevitable, is unlikely to occur without pain; the fact that technical progress guarantees neither virtue nor happiness; the fact that even on these happy shores there is such a thing as evil.

The Reagan administration and its court preachers have been marketing optimism. This strategy has worked so far, but is unlikely to survive even a mild economic downturn, or a foreign adventure less successful than the conquest of Grenada. Especially in view of the continuing weakness of the secular left, the bishops would do well to be on hand to pick up the pieces.

PHILIP E. DEVINE

A time for passion

Immaculata, Penn.

To the Editors: Gordon Zahn's "On Not Writing a Dead Letter" [March 8] managed to say out loud what so many have inwardly sensed: that the bishops' peace pastoral is being left to die on the vine. Zahn says it almost too gently. One time I heard a distinguished speaker hazard an opinion that in the area of peace morality, what is needed is not so much moral passion as wisdom.

Perhaps there is a way in which passion short circuits a needed unraveling of honest complexities, but Zahn's article clarifies one way in which wisdom and passion are healthily integrated. He simply asks that there be some monitoring mechanism to see if the pastoral's norms on deterrence are being violated. In effect it is simply asking the bishops to continue to exercise some moral judgment and not to let the question die.

If nuclear weapons are to be multiplied by some 17 thousand between 1983 and 1993, and if a trillion dollars is budgeted to be spent within five years from the issuance of the pastoral, and if in that time no concrete criticism emerges from bishops either collectively or individually within their dioceses, then I fear one could safely suggest some lack of moral passion. And will not history judge the silence as a loss of moral wisdom as well?

FRANCIS X. MEEHAN

The bishops' priorities

Alexandria, Va.

To the Editors: With regard to "On Not Writing a Dead Letter" [March 8], I still have some serious questions which, to date, have not been answered. Specifically, my questions are as follows: Why did the bishops act as if the anti-abortion crusade was the only issue the church cared about during the 1984 election campaign? Why didn't the bishops address the candidates and parties before the election on "The Challenge of Peace" pastoral as if it really mattered? Why did the bishops wait until after Reagan's landslide victory to issue their pastoral on the economy? From the bishops' viewpoint, where lies the greater evil: is it abortion, or child abuse, or world hunger and mass starvation, or the arms race and the threat of a nuclear holocaust, or poverty in the midst of plenty here at home, or the widening gap between the rich nations and the poor nations, or human rights violations, or dissent within the church? Finally, just what are the priorities of the bishops for the redemption of the human race?

I believe that serious thought and dialogue about these questions is vital if the church is to be faithful to the teachings of Christ, and a genuine voice for peace and justice in the world. Therefore, I would appreciate some answers.

ANTHONY J. DiSTEFANO

The Canadian way

Calgary, Alberta

To the Editors: Nora Magid states ["Ticket to Delay," Feb. 22] that in applying for a passport "Canadians living abroad have to start over each time." As a Canadian citizen residing *in Canada*, when I wished to "renew" my passport the last time (1984), the procedure I was obliged to go through was exactly the one described in her article. Canadians living abroad would thus appear to be under no special disadvantage. To the best of my knowledge, this absurd system complicates the lives of all Canadians.

R.M.CHADBOURNE

The church's treasury

To the Editors: In Abigail McCarthy's article "Can We Light the Way?" [February 8] reference is made to portions from the 1971 Synod's "Justice in the World" which seem to have been ignored — specifically "that the call to justice undertake an examination of the modes of acting and *of the possessions* found within the church herself." I would like to commend Mrs. McCarthy for bringing this out. If the church wants to preach to the consciences of the "haves" in this overwhelming world of the "have-nots," let her first be an example! How can the pope return to the Vatican after seeing the desperate poverty of Latin America and not do what it is in his power to do — raise funds by selling the non-devotional art objects in

(Continued on page 287)

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THE NATURAL FONT OF AUTHORITY

FRANCISCANS MAY BE as gentle as doves, but Brazil's Father Leonardo Boff has remembered the other side of the admonition — the snake part. Boff's book, *Church: Charism & Power*, lets clerical blood. Remarked one Vatican official, "He makes Rome sound like a four-letter word."

The sticking point is ecclesiology: crudely put, the tension between a top-down, command-structure church and Boff's vision of a charismatic, participatory church from below and periphery. "There is no institution today," Boff acknowledges, "that has upheld human dignity more than the Christian community." But if this witness is to be consistent and credible, it demands a major decentralized reconstruction of church order. Yves Congar, Hans Küng, and Edward Schillebeeckx have already argued the same; evidently such appeals are congenial to the two Brazilian cardinals, Aloisio Lorscheider and Paolo Evaristo Arns, who accompanied Father Boff on his interrogation before Rome's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith last September. By now, however, it is fairly clear that democratization is not Pope John Paul's style; he seems to perceive it as that leveling atomization that de Tocqueville observed in North America in the 1830s — each pursuer of happiness reduced to the "solitude of his [*sic*] own heart." "Certain options in Boff's book," declared the CDF on March 19, "are unsustainable."

The book hits unsparingly at a wide range of clerical "pathologies" and unmasks a pattern of pagan power — domination, marginalization, triumphalism, and *hybris* — masquerading beneath a sacred mantle. "One group produces the symbolic goods and another consumes them. . . The group that holds the means of symbolic production develops a corresponding theology that justifies, reinforces, and socializes its power by attributing divine origin to its historical exercise of that power." Equipped with the Occam's razor of neo-Marxist critique, Boff gives new cutting edge to fourteenth-century Franciscan arguments with the papacy over the poverty of Christ.

As Aquinas knew, the most pedestrian, material images are best for speaking of God's act because there's less danger of confusing the sign with the signified. But to a humorless CDF, the use of production-consumption metaphors in connection with the sacraments is anathema. Yet the function of a good metaphor is to defamiliarize the familiar, and we suspect Boff is onto something big.

It was the great theoretician of sacred kingship, A.M. Hocart, who first sought to understand the power of primitive ritual by pointing out that it constitutes a pre-industrial society's basic physics and industry, and that — arguably better than the modern division of labor which hands over power to experts for redistribution — primitive rites really gave "the goods" to every tribal member. In giving every member an active role in the biggest event — God's act of transferring and renovating the forms of life — a person was placed at the center of the cosmos, and

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was made a participant in the divine blood line.

In contrast, sacred kingship — and its modern analogues: the state, the Party, the corporation — expropriate such "blue blood" for the few and spell impotence for the many. All too often, Boff argues, the church has imitated this pattern. But once Christianity is understood against the backdrop of the centralization of ritual under sacred kingship, the Gospel message begins to stand out as a liberating *decentralization* which recovers primitive communalism extended beyond the tribe. The good news startlingly negates antiquity's myths of integration, which reduced the individual to a passive subject. Faithfulness, then, must oppose all authoritarian systems, including ecclesiastical ones, which seek premature closure on the action of the Spirit.

There are two premises underlying Jewish thought. One is its rootedness in an absolute beyond history, the divine will and promise of justice in the certain but indefinite future. The second is that any empirical order is consequently seen as relative, non-obligatory, and inconclusive. In this respect, the prophets are normative: their spirit is nomadic, they will not be taken in, assimilated, or sedentarized by the world. For Jewish thought gives priority to what *must be* over *what is*, to imagination over sealed fates, closed books, and deadening *realpolitik*.

The same Hebrew spirit is evident throughout the New Testament. Why does the pericope of Peter's denial elicit the most serious sympathy, Erich Auerbach asked in his classic *Mimesis*? Because, he wrote,

> . . . it portrays something which neither the poets nor the historians of antiquity ever set out to portray: the birth of a spiritual movement in the depths of the common people, from within the everyday occurrences of contemporary life. . . What we witness is the awakening of a "new heart and a new spirit." . . . It sets man's [*sic*] whole world astir.

God vents in the event. At base, this is the point of the doctrine of the Trinity articulated at Nicaea in 325 A.D. Classical Greek philosophy conceived God as exclusively immutable, and hence incompatible with the messy flux of this world. Nicaea's insistence on the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father denied that there existed any such hiatus as the pagans supposed between being and becoming, God and nature. The natural fountain of revolution and reform, G.K. Chesterton realized, is the old orthodoxy: "that God could have his back against the wall is a boast for all insurgents for ever . . . Christianity . . . has felt that God, to be wholly God, must have been a rebel as well as a king." The Gospels' mock-king identifies with "the least." Why? To break the whole master-slave dialectic upon which nightmare history hinges. "I do not call you servants but friends." The Eucharist invites us to swallow that line whole.

The point, then, is to avoid being swallowed up by any system, ecclesiastical or other. "Our true dignity is not to be parts of a body," Simone Weil wrote, ". . . It consists in this, that . . . Christ . . . becomes in a sense each one of us, as he is completely in each host. The hosts are not *part* of his body."

Human rights

A WORLD OF TORTURE

U.N. CENSURES VIOLATIONS

As 1984 came to its conclusion an event took place, little noticed by the press, which may go down in history in red letters. The United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus the "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment." The convention, the product of seven years' labor by the U.N.'s Commission on Human Rights, was appropriately adopted on December 10, International Human Rights Day. The significance of the convention is seen in light of Amnesty International's estimates that a growing proportion of the world's nations — now over one-third — practice torture as an instrument of national policy.

The adoption of the convention brings closer to reality the judgment of June, 1980, by the U.S. Federal Court of Appeals for the Second District, which agreed to hear a case against Paraguayan, Americo Peña-Irala: "The torturer has become, like the pirate and the slave-trader before him . . . an enemy of all mankind."

The court judged that Dr. Joel Filartiga of Paraguay could bring former Asuncíon Inspector-General of Police, Peña-Irala, to court in Brooklyn for crimes committed by torturers under Peña-Irala's authority which resulted in the death of Filartiga's seventeen-year-old son Joelito. In the view of the court, torture is a violation of international treaties and declarations which are "an expression of the evolving law of nations."

Now that the U.N. has adopted the convention, and once it is ratified, prohibition of torture will be firmly established as the law of nations. What occurred because Peña-Irala and Filartiga visited the U.S. at the same time may now occur throughout the world in many nations. Filartiga's successful case against his son's murderers may be the first of many future prosecutions.

For the first time in history, an independent, international, juridical body will be set up to receive complaints by individuals, organizations, or states. It will hear cases concerning governments' failures to bring torturers to justice. For example, Paraguayan courts had acquitted Peña-Irala, but remedies against torture will no longer be limited to jurisdictions in which victims or alleged perpetrators are nationals, or to lands in which the torture is alleged to have occurred.

Each state which becomes party to the convention shall, in the convention's sweeping provisions, "take effective legislative, administrative, judicial, or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction. No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public

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emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture. An order from a superior officer or a public authority may not be invoked as a justification of torture."

Furthermore, each state party is required to ensure that all acts of torture are offenses under its criminal law. Any participant state in whose territory a person alleged to have committed torture is found shall be required to: take the accused into custody; proceed to make preliminary inquiry; notify the state(s) of which the torturer is a national or where the torture is alleged to have been committed; indicate whether it intends to exercise jurisdiction. Such states are forbidden to extradite accused persons without assurance from the country requesting extradition that it will itself prosecute the accused.

In addition to actions required of individual member states, an overall watchdog body, the Committee against Torture, consisting of ten experts in human rights serving in their personal capacity, will have an important role. The committee will receive regular reports, from nations which are party to the convention, of steps they have taken to comply with its requirements. It will, in addition, make inquiries into reports — by individuals, organizations, or states party to the convention — that torture is being practiced in any participating nation. Though its investigations will be confidential and carried out as far as possible in cooperation with the state concerned, the committee will judge whether a violation has occurred. When it reaches such consensus it has authority to publish its findings.

Initially, as religious, non-governmental organizations were briefed on the convention at the U.N. last November, it appeared likely that the convention would be adopted by a majority vote, with many abstentions. The Western nations, and a number of third world countries, led by Argentina, were pushing strongly for the convention's adoption. Eastern bloc nations appeared to be holding back. That the convention was adopted by consensus is largely due to successful negotiations over an amendment submitted by the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. The amendment, as accepted by the sponsors, affords states the opportunity to declare, upon ratification of the convention, that they do not recognize the competence of the Committee against Torture in regard to themselves. Any state may withdraw such a reservation at a later date. Though the sponsors' acceptance of the amendment reduces the convention's power, it by no means invalidates it, for three reasons: (1) all states which ratify will still be required to take *internal* measures to outlaw and eliminate torture, (2) states which refuse to recognize the authority of the committee will have to make a public statement of their refusal — a step with bad public relations overtones, and (3) such states forfeit the right to make complaints against other states.

The General Assembly has now done what it has the power to do. Its work is a credit to the Human Rights Commission. Alphons Hamer of the Netherlands Mission, the convention's chief sponsor, told us that the convention's provisions reach to "the limits presently possible for an agreement among the governments in the international community." The U.S. State Department is not alone in describing the convention as "an outstanding achievement."

To make the convention effective, however, requires more than the statements of international bureaucrats; it requires political will. Individuals and organizations anxious to see the convention begin the work it was designed for — including Amnesty International, a key actor — now have the ball in their court. The next move is to insist that governments ratify the convention without delay.

The U.S. has a long and sorry history of supporting international human rights instruments up to their very adoption and then failing to ratify them. If, as Ambassador Richard Schifter told us at the briefing, the U.S. "believes the provisions of the convention calling for universal jurdisdiction are essential and fully satisfactory," then President Reagan must submit the convention forthwith to the Senate for ratification. The U.S. should ratify it, declaring formally that it recognizes the competence of the Committee against Torture with regard to itself.

ALFRED KRASS

(Alfred Krass, a United Church of Christ minister, is Chairperson of American Christians for the Abolition of Torture, a national, ecumenical, human rights organization based in Philadelphia.)

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

THE FINAL STING

DEATH AND THE MODERN CHRISTIAN

IN MARKING the Ascension Christians celebrate the final Easter action and the mystery of the triumph over death. Insofar as any modern Christian enters into the liturgical observance, he or she finds it difficult to grapple with the mystery as more than an abstraction. For the first Christians Easter was an answer to death for each person and for the community. In the world in which we live, the experience of death is different and so is the perception of community.

Every death is personal. Every death is particular. Every death among friends or family is a foretaste of one's own. The singular, lonely character of death has been heightened today by what Pheme Perkins aptly called its "mechanization" in modern hospitals (*Commonweal*, April 5), but ever was a lonely act, even in the more humane setting of my own memory.

In the town in which I was born and spent my early years, people were born at home and died at home. We children

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often lived with approaching death in the next room or down the hall. We played under windows from which floated the murmur of those sitting with the dying, and thought a coffin in the living room nothing strange. All of us knew the sign of death within — the spray of flowers on the door of a house, beribboned in purple for an adult, white for a child. We knew, too, the sound of church bells announcing the departure of the body from the church to the cemetery, and learned to count the slow, solemn strokes tolling out the age of the one who had died.

Death was familiar then, and not so frightening, but it was also always an occasion for sadness and mourning. The liturgy of death stressed eternal rest, peace — death as at best a surcease of struggle and suffering.

Even in my early years the more communal way of death had begun to change in our town and had changed, I suppose, in the nearby cities long since. Death was relegated to hospitals and became the business of doctors, nurses, of the clergy hurrying in and out — and, of course, of the undertakers who did their best to disguise it. Friends and family no longer shared the last of life; they became bystanders. Comfort — if any — was ministered by professionals and strangers. The fact of death was avoided. It became bad form, even for the dying, to advert to it. It was essentially denied. The dying were medical failures left to machines and their technicians.

To say this is only to say what almost everyone now admits and deplores. The reaction set in some years ago, put in process by thinkers like Kübler-Ross and by efforts to recover the humane like the hospice movement. But it is not easy to recover the former relative ease we had with death. Our consciousness of it has altered. The sharp physical line between life and death is now blurred. We are at odds as to when death occurs. The once clear separation between body and soul is complicated for even those less than literal-minded by the fact that parts of one person's — or if you like, one soul's — body can live on and give life or use to another's. And many of us live too long and are, in the end, so altered and enfeebled that it is difficult to find meaning in

our deaths.

In the light of all this there is a certain irony but also, perhaps, a salutary contradiction in scriptural study which reaffirms death as prelude to an altered state in which one is new, changed, and participant in intense life. And also in a liturgy of death which now, for Catholics, celebrates the happiness of death as entry into eternity.

In a way I find some reconciliation of these contradictions in the choices made by three of my friends this past year. They elected to die at home. Two of them — one nationally known and admired, the other well-known and beloved in his community — affected many others by this choice. They raised up death for the consideration of those whose lives they touched. Their acknowledgment and acceptance of what they faced forced others to confront mortality. They invited participation in their own sufferings. They gave others the opportunity to offer comfort. Inevitably their dying evoked the question of whether life persists or not; however, their very ability to live and love fully and in a community of belief until the end makes it difficult to think other than that they continue to live now, that life is indeed everlasting.

But the death of the third friend was another matter. Can we accept that because she could not believe, because her death was bitterly private, that it was any less meaningful? The contemporary Christian who has shared such a person's life must say no. My friend was proud, aged, filled with discontent, reserved, and without the art of intimacy. Yet she had loved, as she could, her own and cared for them. She had a wide circle of friends who found her charming and interesting. To the end, she was capable of making new ones. She evoked devotion in those who worked for her. She was a person to whom attention was paid.

In dying she did not call for the filial concern and care of children and grandchildren — perhaps because she did not want to risk its denial. She refused hospital and medical care. She retreated to her home like the proverbial wounded animal to its lair. She accepted the concern and affection of friends who were at a distance, but forestalled the expression of either from those who were nearby. As far as it can be known, she died uncomforted, unhappy, and unbelieving.

For any explanation we go back to the death that brought us Easter. In the petition for the unbelieving on Good Friday we ask that they find God "by sincerely following what is right," and that they may recognize in our lives "the tokens of his love and mercy." Since each one's dying is ultimately quite alone, we must trust that a friend in unbelief who followed the right had seen in us tokens of love and mercy sufficient for that moment. (If not, on our heads be it!)

In the Easter weeks we affirm that the Emmanuel — the God-who-was-and-is-with us — took on the death of all. He participates in the death of each of us. In his story the action of dying includes the denial by friends, the revulsion in the garden, and the despairing cry on the cross, just as it includes the love, companionship, and devotion of those who suffered with him. Those who die sharing any part of that death also share in some way in his rising. We must believe that — in our widened sense of community — otherwise we cannot cry Alleluia.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

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Re-forming the questions on arms control

J. Bryan Hehir

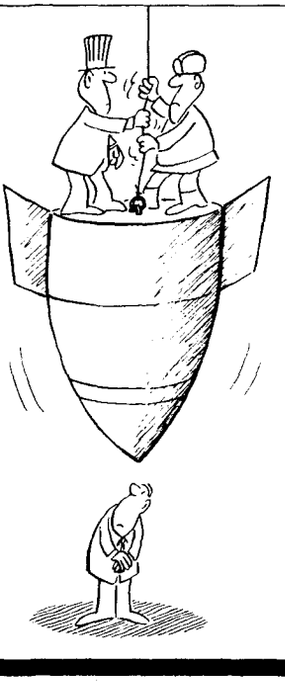
THE LATEST round of arms negotiations at Geneva between the United States and the Soviet Union poses two distinct questions. First, what are the prospects for "success" in the negotiations? Second, how do U.S.-Soviet relations in general relate to the specific question of nuclear arms negotiations?

When negotiations begin, so much in the public eye, the inevitable question of what we can or should expect arises. In the mid-1980s, however, the question has a particular sharpness. It is not simply that the negotiations will be frighteningly complex and the U.S.-Soviet relationship will be, as always, conflictual; the particular edge given to the question of success in the 1980s is whether negotiated arms agreements are *possible* at the strategic nuclear level. The state of expert opinion is probably more pessimistic about this question than is the general public.

Today, the public may be more interested in and more supportive of arms negotiations than it was at anytime in the 1970s. And in striking contrast to the early 1980s, no one wants to be seen as an obstacle to a negotiated halt to the arms race.

But debate among experts manifests more doubt — from both left and right — than we have been accustomed to find in the policy community. George Will, for example, has not changed his view for many years: he sees negotiated arms agreements with the Soviets as a chimera, and he is waging a sustained campaign against the Reagan administration's soft-line toward the Soviets! For readers of Will only the tone of the argument is any surprise. Zbigniew Brezinski judges the era of major negotiated treaties between the superpowers to be over; technological change, much of it rendering verification of treaties impossible, has doomed attempts to shape successors to the Test Ban Treaty or SALT I. Today, more fruitful measures lie in independent steps that could be taken by each of the superpowers to enhance stability in the nuclear relationship. Will and Brezinski share a pessimism about Soviet intentions.

Others coming from a different place in the political spectrum express doubts about the possibilities of arms control. These include people who have helped design the arms control process and have spent years trying to make it work. They reluctantly express the view that arms control too often confirms rather than restrains arms competition. Central to this paradox is the way in which negotiations in progress are used to justify "one more system" for each of the superpowers as part of the proposed bargain. It may fairly be said that Will is hostile to the concept of arms control. While these other voices are not, they still place increasing emphasis on steps other than large scale negotiations to restrain the arms race.



These doubters of arms control constitute a formidable constituency precisely because of their diversity. Having seen the arguments, I am disturbed but not convinced. It is easy to invest the arms control process with expectations it cannot meet. I do not even deny the formidable new problems facing any agreement in a MIRVed world and with anti-satellite weapons threatening the normal means of verification. But in a world where nuclear weapons won't go away, I am convinced arms control cannot be put away. Its contribution may, at best, be only a slice of the solution to preventing nuclear war, but it must be pursued. We may need to think differently about *how* to pursue negotiated controls, but we should not be focusing the debate on *whether* arms control should be pursued.

One of the reasons I remain stubborn on arms control is because the process fits one dimension of the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Nuclear weapons have created an objective common ground between the superpowers. It does not rest, at its most basic level, on the intentions, aspirations, or motivations of either the United States or the Soviet Union. It rests on the utter disproportionality between any use of nuclear weapons by either power, and the political objectives either might try to obtain by resorting to these weapons. They both lose in an absolute sense if nuclear weapons are used. This narrow strip of common interest will not alter other dimensions of the U.S.-Soviet relationship. It will not alter competition in the Horn of Africa, jockeying for leverage in the Middle East, or jousting in Central America. But none of this should obscure what we share in common — almost in spite of our political systems.

Geneva is neither the beginning nor the end of the arms control process. I have very modest hopes and severe objections to the negotiating strategy at the present moment. But the process of arms control is larger than Geneva and must be kept alive. J. BRYAN HEHIR

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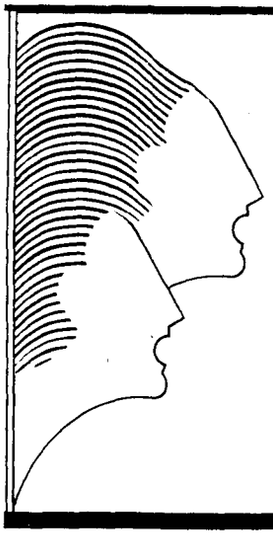

The critical function of feminine spirituality

MONIKA K. HELLWIG

WHEN WE LOOK through the centuries of Christian history, we find ample instruction in women's potential for greatness. We find in spite of unfavorable circumstances, a surprising number of Christian women whose learning, competence, and spirituality made creative, significant contributions to their societies and the history of the redemption of the world. Some well-known women spring immediately to mind: the great queens, Clotilde of the Franks, Margaret of Scotland, Elizabeth of Hungary, and Elizabeth of Portugal; the great foundresses and abbesses, Brigid of Ireland, Hilda of Whitby, Hildegard of Bingen, Gertrud von Hackeborn, Gertrud the Great of Helfta, Teresa of Avila; and nearer our own times, Elizabeth Seton, Francesca Cabrini, Janet Erskine Stuart. Extraordinary women broke through all the stereotypes and did truly unique and creatively redemptive things, each in her own situation and setting: Egeria the Pilgrim, Perpetua the scholarly martyr, Hadewijch of Brabant, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Catherine of Genoa, and many more. There have also been extraordinary reformers, envisaging transformation of social structures, or sometimes bringing them about almost by accident — people such as Elizabeth Fry, Octavia Hill, Frances Cobbe, Josephine Butler, Dorothy Day, Clara Lubich, Catherine de Hueck, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Yet it must be admitted that in spite of these splendid women, we have only fragments of a "usable past" to guide and inspire us in shaping a spirituality for Christian women in the troubled world of our times. We do not lack prayer traditions, though there is still some tendency for these to be either monastic in origin and diluted for lay people, or lay in origin but tending to devotional expressions not centered upon the great mysteries of salvation. We do not lack traditional teachings concerning Christian virtues, but these tend to point women towards submission in church, society, and family, and therefore tend to become counsels of passivity. They tend to understate and to obscure the potential and the vocation of Christian women.

The problem is, in one sense, a general one. The earliest Christians lived in a world that did not know democracy and had not taken note of its economic and social systems. In that world they were not purely passive, but it often seems to us retrospectively that they were so. Actually, as more critical appraisal shows us, the early Christians, both men and women, were quite creatively revolutionary in their approach to human society as they knew it. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles and from the letters of Paul, that these Christians structured their own communities in totally new ways. They rejected all formalities, distinctions, and separations which might interfere with total community. Property and resources were held in trust for those in need, so there could be no divisions in their society based on the distinction between rich and poor. Leadership in accord with the Good News of Jesus Christ meant service, not domination, and therefore there was no need for titles of respect to establish psychological distance. Moreover, in Christ there was no distinction between slave and free, Jew and gentile, Greek and barbarian, male and female. These distinctions did not cease to exist; they ceased to be definitive of the dignity, destiny, and potential of the community members. In addition, Christians would not kill or harm or go to law to defend their claims.

In their own nonaggressive, nonviolent way, Christians of the first three centuries introduced radical questions and radical reform of structures into the culture of pagan antiquity. It should cause little wonder that they were feared and persecuted by the Empire; they were bringing about a revolution all the more sure and drastic because it was not a rebellion and cost no lives other than their own at the hands of their persecutors. It should also cause little wonder that by the beginning of the fourth century the Empire could only survive by ending hostilities and joining common cause with the Christians.

It was as this symbiosis of Christendom developed, that

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Christian energies and devotion were called forth to a new critical function. It is of interest to us today to observe the ways in which that critical function was carried out. There were, of course, those who exercised leadership within the system, trying to mold it to a more Christian pattern, and this was the case with most of the bishops as well as some great civic leaders. There were also those who challenged ill-used power directly, such as Ambrose of Milan. But there were some who carried out their critique as Christians had always done, by joining themselves to a counter-cultural community, living as best they could by the values and principles of the Gospel. Such were the communities of desert hermits and later of monastic groups. Such also were other lay groupings like that of the women who associated with Paula of Rome.

With the collapse and disintegration of the old Empire in the West, Christian spirituality took a new turn, doing something rather unexpected. It embraced and preserved and integrated into itself much of the old pagan philosophy, law, literature, and culture. There is often a call to consider movements of thought and action and organization around us in a new light for a new age.

Examples from the past can never be uncritically followed in subsequent ages because the context for action and decision is never the same. Throughout the medieval period, there was on the one hand a sense of Christendom which we have clearly lost in our experience of plurality, and there was on the other hand a persistent struggle between ecclesiastical and secular power which has today taken on entirely new forms. Likewise, a certain tension existed between the theological discourse of the scholastics from which women were almost systematically excluded, and the lively and colorful devotional traditions in which women such as the German nuns, the Flemish and English mystics, and the Italian Catherines, played very active roles. These women are to us more admirable than imitable, precisely because we as contemporary women are not excluded from the mainstreams of theology and there is no reason to build a spirituality without explicit theological foundations. Yet the inspiration of outstanding medieval women remains fresh.

From history emerges the important question: how are we to identify the "usable past" that provides us with models, insights, warnings, hope, and challenge? We must acknowledge that the lives and impact of women have not been recorded for us with the same profusion as those of men. While this is true of secular histories, it is especially so of religious histories. There are many reasons for this. Most historical interest has centered upon public life, whereas the customary division of labor until relatively modern times kept the activities of most women enclosed within the family circle. Therefore, examples that are recorded are even more exceptional than in the case of men, for whom truly ordinary lives were not recorded either. Moreover, the focus of religious histories has commonly been upon the churches precisely as institutions. The systematic exclusion of women from ordination and from positions of hierarchic authority guarantees that in these histories we read little or nothing about women. This is less true, however, of histories of spirituality which have consistently taken note of monastic communities and of lay Christians who initiated works of piety or charity or otherwise attracted attention among their contemporaries. In this there has been no reason for sexual discrimination, so that we really do have living examples in considerable detail.

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Allowing for the inevitable bias in the available data, we can nevertheless draw some conclusions. Just because they were excluded from much of conventional public life, from ordination, and hierarchic authority, those Christian women who were recognized as memorable have emerged as strongly counter-cultural in their attitudes, expectations, relationships, and actions. Leadership by domination was frequently not open to women, nor were titles that inspire awe and create psychological distance. That left open the options of ministry, service, horizontal leadership by inspiration, invitation, and community bonds of support. Similarly, conventional governing roles were usually closed to women; left open were options for a more prophetic style than is usually possible to those who fill official positions and play conventional roles. Women were often in a better position to notice what was left undone and who was left out in the pastoral practice of the institutional church.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when we do have records of the work and impact of Christian women on their societies, that impact tends to be prophetic, radical in its implications for the social structures of the society in the long run, and, in terms of social dynamics, a movement from below. Initiatives for care of the indigent sick, for example, led eventually to the acceptance of the idea that each society is responsible for the health care of its citizens — without reference to their ability to pay. Another example is schooling for children of the poor, including orphaned and homeless children, which eventually led to almost universal literacy, public school systems, and a general belief in education as a basic right. Such initiatives in health care and education, commonly taken by women who saw them as expressions of faith called forth by the immediate circumstances in which they lived, had long-term consequences in all of Western society, and, through colonization and international organizations, have now become a challenge to the whole world.

One of the most interesting aspects of the impact of Christian women in the past is their concern for peace. From the unsuccessful efforts of Clotilde of the Franks, through a history that includes Elizabeth of Hungary, Elizabeth of Portugal, and Catherine of Siena, down to the peace protests of Dorothy Day and the women of Greenham Common, striving for peace

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POEMS by Anne Porter

Four Seasons Carol

The barbs of cruel Auschwitz
Grow back again and again
Hiroshima's poison
Gluts the arsenals
Famines invade and wither
The lands of Africa,

Coldness and greed and war
Multiply past counting
The deaths of children
And the wounds of the poor

Whose bitter wants and sorrows
Are splinters of your Passion,
Jesus, hunted Child.

Then grant us grace to bring them
More than stale crusts and empty prayers
That hinder your just kingdom.

A Biography of Flowers

This is the history of three small brown onions.
Each had two poles, at one
A fringe of dried-up rootlets
And opposite
An inch-long leaf-bud like an ivory fang.
I took them home
And stood them in a bowl of stones and water
And closed them up in a dark place.

Living for days on nothing but water and darkness
The rootlets thickened and the leaf-buds grew.
I brought them out to the blank winter sunshine
Where fed by light as flames by air
The leaves flowed high and filled themselves with green.
Then at their tips
Like the green heads of many little serpents
Each blindfolded by a tight filmy sheath
The flower-buds appeared,

Enlarged, grew lumpy, split.
And lighter than a snake's shed skin
The striped bud-cases peeled off.

Then to the cloudy morning
Of February's eleventh day
There opened with birth's dazzling shock
Miraculous white flowers

And all in silence.

and reconciliation of hostile parties has been characteristic of the lives of noted Christian women. Because of their general exclusion from power, the motivation of women's peace efforts has not come from the desire for unhampered, unqualified control of a country after the manner of the famous Pax Romana. Rather it has arisen from compassionate horror of the suffering that war causes, often to those who have least stake in the outcome.

The all-important question, of course, is: what inspiration and implications can we draw for our own times? As long as women continue to be excluded from ordination and from institutionalized positions of leadership and decision-making in the church, we may as well acknowledge some advantages as well as the more obvious disadvantages. To have little or no access to bullying power, to be unable to compel or persuade by threat or institutional sanctions, is necessarily to be thrown back upon other resources. We may discover that divine power, grace, is of a very different kind, effective inasmuch as it empowers and liberates human freedom — freedom for self-transcendence, for community with others, for God, and for God's purposes in history. On the other hand, to have access to bullying power is inevitably to be sorely tempted to use it, which is not Christ's way. Because of our church organization, Christ's empowerment of human freedom is likely to be more immediately apparent to women.

The possibilities for a spirituality of Christian women that can really make a difference in a troubled world, seem to be concerned particularly with prayer, compassion, solidarity, and creative imagination. These components bridge the gap between the available traditional models and the situation of contemporary women with their far greater access to positions of power and public persuasion.

Our immediate challenge is to move beyond submissive passivity in the affairs of society without indulging in angry

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Refugee Servant

Twilight has silenced the thrushes
And opens the evening star
The sounds of tennis are over
And now there are voices and laughter
And the rattle of ice in glass,

It's time to go down to the kitchen.
Maria stops on the landing
To pin up her black hair,
Folding away like a letter
The tin huts and fierce mountains
Of her far native country.

November Sunrise

Wild geese are flocking and calling in pure golden air,
Glory like that which painters long ago
Spread as a background for some little hermit
Outside his cave, giving his cloak away,
Or for some martyr stretching out
On her expected rack.
A few black cedars grow near by,
The headsman's donkey grazes.

Small craftsmen steeped in anonymity like bees
Gilded their wooden panels, leaving fame to chance,
And the maker of this wing-flooded golden sky
Forgives us all our ignorance
Both of his nature and of his very name,
Freely accepting our one heedless glance.

Oaks and Squirrels
Genesis 18:27

"I speak to my Lord though I am dust and ashes,"
A handful of ashes the wind will soon send flying
Into the drifted oak-leaves under the hedge.
No gardener ever rakes there
Only the squirrels gather bedding there
When they stack up their rustling nests.

You have granted me more time
On earth than the squirrels, less time than the oak,
Whose secret takes a hundred years to tell.
Out of the acorn in the dirt
Its wooden sticks come up
Already knowing how to grow their leaves
And when to spend them all,
Knowing exactly
How to thread up into a winter sky
A dark-veined map like that of a great river
Spun out in tapering streams,
Twig by twig ascending and unfolding
Until at night its topmost buds
Enter the country of the stars.

By day
The squirrels run like script along its boughs
And write their lives with their light bodies.
They are afraid of us
We can never hold them
And there's no room for us in their invisible ark,
Our home is warring disobedient history.

rejection of the traditions of our faith or in aggressively competitive self-promotion which moves against, rather than with, the redemption of the world. It is necessary to find ways of innovating, using initiative and exerting leadership, which are not based upon personal anger, and which do not seek to dominate or to seize exclusive privileges. We must avoid entering into competition for what have been male prerogatives in a sinful history based upon bullying; we must discern new possibilities for quite *different* forms of social organization, community structures, and cooperation. This calls for more than determination and aggressive energy; it calls for contemplative sensitivity out of which new configurations can be imagined.

Another challenge is to disentangle what is biologically determined as specifically feminine from what is culturally prescribed, and then to distinguish these from what makes up the Christian vocation of women. There are no easy answers to this. The biological component of sexual determination is, as we now come to realize, not static but responds to natural environment, nutritional factors, activity, culture, and other spiritual factors. Indeed, the biological component can be extensively modified by deliberate human intervention. It has at times been generally accepted that women tend to be emotionally unstable, dependent, physically fragile, and intellectually inferior to men. We have now discovered that good health care and social encouragement eliminate any such attributes. Factors that do not change in the biological determination are: the sexual complementarity of women and men, which allows for strong horizontal bonds in the human community; the capacity for child-bearing, which allows for strong vertical bonds across generations.

What is culturally prescribed, usually based on biological factors, is tailored to the economy, ecology, and political structure of each society. One of the most important founda-

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tions for a true personal spirituality is an unhurried, calm, non-violent, but *fearlessly radical critique* of the sex-role definitions of one's own society in the light of the Christian vocation. We live within a history of sin that distorts the truth of our existence in very persuasive ways. By analyzing our society we must try to distinguish what is God's good creation, from what is the consequence of a history of sin, and what is already in the order of redemption because it has been touched and transformed by grace. This distinction is made by an earnest quest for a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ by meditation on Scripture, study of commentary, history, and the believing community's experience.

A DISCERNMENT of the Christian vocation of women requires clarity about basic Christian teachings: revelation, creation, sin and redemption, christology and grace, church and sacramentality, and the hoped for outcome of redemptive history. It is only in the context of these teachings and the large framework of interpretation of reality which they set, that any vocational question can come into focus. But further determination must be made on the basis of two questions: what are the needs of the community and what is the capacity of this individual or group to respond to those needs? Where the two intersect, the call of God is to be found. But this implies that a vocation is not a call issued once in a lifetime. Vocational choices must be made throughout one's life.

Likewise, the vocation of Christian women as a class is not a determination to be made once. Rather it is a discernment to be made continuously throughout the generations of Christian history and within particular cultural, economic, and socio-political situations. We in North America must take into account the wealth at our disposal, the extent to which we have been liberated from backbreaking, soul-destroying, physical work, the civic rights we enjoy, the educational advantages which we have had, and the world of desperate needs which surrounds us. We have unprecedented opportunities to participate actively in the affairs of the larger society through professional or business careers, through political activity, and through volunteer work.

It is time, then, for individual and communal discernment on the part of Christian women. From the beginning, Christians have known that they were called upon to do the impossible. When we look at Scripture and at history, we can see a pattern in the way former impossibilities became subsequent realization: the dynamics of the prophetic are in the creative imagination; the Scriptures provide rich imagery and symbolism, replete with stories of classic universality, and personality prototypes that cross cultures and centuries. Catholic tradition has particularly appreciated this in its promotion of the sacramental principle. It has taken note of the extent to which the human imagination needs to be educated in a world distorted by the consequences of sin.

When we look at the world about us, we never simply record what is there; we interpret. Society teaches us certain lines of interpretation: what is good or bad, normal or abnormal, more or less desirable, even more or less reasonable. The tradition, values, and expectations of our own society hold us captive. Even a pluralistic society limits the range of alternatives in ways we do not easily recognize. It is very difficult to imagine anything beyond the permitted range. A fundamental task of Christian spirituality is *imagination* — to break the process of interpretation wide open to glimpse entirely new possibilities of human life and relationships.

Imagination is exercised through literature, the visual and performing arts, but also through human relationships, social structures, technology, and science. Christian spirituality is related to all of these: it should inform them and it should be informed by them. It should inform them not in the sense that art and science would be deliberately used to moralize, catechize, or defend the faith. Rather, Christians, steeped in Scripture and deeply influenced by prayer and by the imperatives of charity, should pursue the arts as a vocation, should engage in political process and policy, and should devote themselves to technological invention and scientific research. They need only be fully what they are and take the field seriously for what it is, and the redemption of the society through the expanding imagination will happen. Channels for redemptive grace run through us if we allow them to be open. But it is also true that the expressions of human ingenuity need to inform Christian spirituality to ensure that it is dealing with the real problems of real people — to ensure that Christian spirituality is authentic and not simply an escape into a dream world.

Throughout history women have been allowed rather freely into the realms of imagination in the arts and literature and sometimes even in science, but in previous generations they were seldom taken seriously. Their interests and activities were allowed as hobbies and this alone justified the time, energy, and resources spent upon them. Today, increasing respect and freedom for women in the public sphere is a great opportunity which carries subtle temptations. There is a temptation to look on new openings simply as career opportunities and occasions for self-advancement rather than as matters of Christian vocation. The temptation to enter the public sphere in a purely competitive spirit seeking enhancement of prestige, wealth, and power is real, opposed to a spirit of service, compassion, and solidarity. To yield to these temptations is a great loss. It closes the imagination, locking people into already established patterns, rather than opening them up to new possibilities.

Because of our history and because of the turning point at which we of this generation stand, Christian women have a calling to preserve their freedom of spirit in using their creative imagination, in the way that they have possessed it in their socially and politically powerless past. At the same time we must express that freedom and creativity with power in the public sphere. This combination of spiritual freedom, social opportunity, and power holds promise of creative ways to build bridges of reconciliation towards world peace, to restructure systems of society which impoverish and exclude the powerless, and to sow "seeds of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race."

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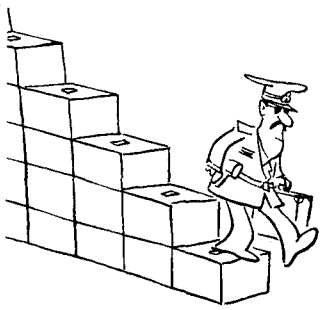

A time to be realistic

JIM CHAPIN

THE MARCH 31 elections in El Salvador might have been a turning point in Salvadoran history, the moment at which the long travail of that small nation began to come to an end. Or they might have been just another way station on the road to disaster. The election has put the United States in a position to make the difference. Unfortunately, Washington is not prepared to take advantage of the opportunity opened by the Salvadoran people.

Recent elections in El Salvador, as Jack Clark and I argued in previous issues [June 3, 1983 and May 4, 1984], have been important chiefly because they settled accounts in the government coalition. But the American press has persisted in treating each election as a referendum on the guerrillas. Each time a flurry of articles in the *New York Times* and other publications hastened to explain that the results amounted to a defeat for the guerrillas. This time, the same sources had written before the election that the U.S. was hoping to see the right wing rather than the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) win. In past elections the high turnout (whether real or "arranged") was treated as a defeat for the guerrillas; in this election a turnout less than two-thirds of that reported in 1982 was referred to only in passing. One wonders *what* election result would have been treated as a victory for the guerrillas, or, for example, what election results or procedures in Nicaragua would *not* have been treated as a defeat for that government.

The fact remains, there are many more than two "sides" in this war. Each force, government and revolutionary, is composed of several groups which themselves are in desperate competition, a competition marked by violence, corruption, and chicanery. Any analysis of who is "winning" this war must extend beyond "our side" and "their side" to the all-important question of *which* actor on which side.

On the government side, the original moderate reform coalition that took power in a military *coup* in 1979 drifted steadily rightward. Jose Napoleon Duarte was all-too-powerless as provisional president. After the 1982 Assembly elections, he lost his office altogether to a candidate picked by the army and the U.S. to keep Roberto D'Aubuisson out of power.

But the drift on the government side changed direction in 1984. The guerrilla offensive at the end of 1983 and beginning of 1984 showed that the Salvadoran army was in bad shape. The need to win congressional support for American policy eventually drew the Reagan administration to throw its support into a multi-million dollar effort to keep D'Aubuisson and his semi-fascist ARENA party out of power. This program involved heavy subsidies for both the PDC and the old military oligarchic National Conciliation Party (PCN), not to mention for the election process itself.

The right felt double-crossed by their American allies. In this country, Senator Jesse Helms simply wrote President Reagan protesting the support given to Duarte by American Ambassador Thomas Pickering. In El Salvador, they do things differently. At least according to a widely credited account D'Aubuisson and his friends decided to murder the Ambassador. On May 18, 1984 General Vernon Walters flew into El Salvador for a private meeting with Pickering, D'Aubuisson, and D'Aubuisson aide Francisco "Chico" Guirola, reportedly to explain to him that the U.S. government would be displeased if he murdered the U.S. ambassador! (This may have marked an important shift in American policy; D'Aubuisson's links with those believed to have murdered American nuns and labor advisers and Salvadoran archbishops had not previously seemed to excite administration protest.) Possibly as a sort of consolation prize for sparing Pickering's head, D'Aubuisson was offered a visa to go to the United States and see his fans on the New Right.

Not only Duarte's 1984 election but also his success in winning a vast increase of aid for El Salvador from the American Congress and from Europeans gave him more clout than he had ever had before, certainly more influence than he had as provisional president from 1980-82. The result was a series of very complex negotiations with the armed forces, with mixed results.

Some of the most notorious extreme-right officers (including Nicolas Carranza of the Treasury Police) were transferred out of the country, and the infamous S-2 section of the Treasury Police was disbanded. The American press treated these changes as a major victory against the right in the army. The press did not notice that the past records of the remaining "moderates" did not exactly inspire hope. Lieutenant Colonel Domingo Monterrosa — according to the *New York Times*, the "most-admired fighter in the army," at the time the guerrillas killed him — was the man who had perpetrated the bloodiest

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massacre of the war, the El Mazote in December 1981. Defense Minister Vides Casanova, who headed the "moderate" faction, was generally known to be protecting his cousin, said to have overseen the murder of the American nuns. At the same time, some "right-wingers" were brought back. Sigifredo Ochoa, whose refusal to obey orders had brought down General Guillermo Garcia in 1983, was brought back from overseas and placed in charge of Chalatenango province on September 3, 1984; the army still featured such leading lights as Lieutenant Colonel Denis Moran, reported to be the key figure in the killing of the AIFLD workers.

Although Duarte's victory in the presidential elections meant that he could staff most of the executive branch with PDC people, the right-wing majority in the Assembly killed the shreds of land reform, appointed D'Aubuisson's personal lawyer as Attorney General, and stacked the election commission and the Supreme Court with its own members.

IT WAS in this situation that last fall Duarte surprised both his American and army allies by suddenly proposing talks at La Palma with the FDR-FMLN. As Terry Lynn Karl has pointed out in a first-rate article for *World Policy* ("After La Palma: The Prospects for Democratization in El Salvador," Spring 1985), the Christian Democratic policy in El Salvador has been based not only on Salvadoran experiences, but on the experiences of their Christian Democratic compatriots in bringing democracy to Venezuela in 1957-58 and in allowing Chilean democracy to collapse in 1970-73. Central to the resulting ideas on democratization was the conception of democracy as a step-by-step process, depending on pacts between opposing forces, and upon a recognition by all forces that none could rule a country by itself. Terry Lynn Karl explains Christian Democratic policy as based upon an alliance with the army, trying to wean it from its connection with the oligarchy, and then making an approach to the left. This policy failed in El Salvador in the early 1980s, but events in 1984 demonstrated that the situation was stalemated and offered an opportunity to reopen the question of a peaceful settlement.

Although the meeting at La Palma was only a gesture, and one followed by very little action, the power of the oligarchy and the right in El Salvador, like that of all such systems, is based largely on perception. The fervor of the right-wing opposition against Duarte can be understood only in the light of the right's *accurate* understanding that the structure of the old society cannot be maintained if even the *illusion* of dialogue is permitted.

The right's reaction to La Palma was not moderate: Pedro Rene Yanes, head of the Presidential Commission on Ethics, was murdered by an ARENA member. The right-wing majority in the Assembly changed the rules for the 1985 Assembly and municipal elections. Compulsory voting was ended. Voting had to take place in voters' hometowns. Parties were allowed to run separately with their emblems but still have their votes considered together (allowing ARENA and the PCN to run a joint slate). Relatives of the president were prevented from running for office (keeping Duarte's son from being re-elected mayor of San Salvador). Duarte's veto of these bills was canceled by the Supreme Court controlled by the right. In early January, D'Aubuisson boasted that the right was going to win a sweeping majority, enough to override vetoes. Such a result was welcomed by the U.S.: according to the *Washington Post*'s interpretation of U.S. hopes, "a conservative victory would encourage Salvadoran rightists to pursue parliamentary and democratic tactics and thus wean some of them away from violence." (This is an argument that the Reagan administration has never applied to armed *leftists* in Salvador or South Africa.)

THE FEELING THAT the PDC would lose seats was shared by almost all commentators, pointing to an ineffective incumbency, the loss of American financial support, the change in the electoral laws, and the inability of Duarte to satisfy the demands of his own constituency. Nevertheless, there had been a sharp reduction in death squad activities since Duarte resumed power: Elliott Abrams claimed that they were down to forty-six deaths a month by the end of the year in "democratic" El Salvador (the same report attributed six deaths in 1984 to the "totalitarian" Nicaraguans). The response of leftists to these changes was two-fold: either to deny that they had happened or to suggest that they were the result of the lack of anyone left to kill. At the same time, however, *leftist* violence in the cities was becoming more frequent and successful; five of the sixty Assembly members elected in 1982 were dead by 1984, and in March 1985 alone Lt. Col. Ricardo Aristides Cienfuegos, the press spokesman for the armed forces, and General Jose Alberto Medrano, the long-time boss of the dreaded ORDEN, were killed. The ability of left-wing cadres to penetrate the cities suggested that some networks decimated by the slaughter at the beginning of the decade were being rebuilt.

Ironically, however, the shrewdest blow against the right wing may have been struck by the American government: the February 6 arrest of "Chico" Guirola at the Kleberg County Airport in Texas with $5.9 million in cash packed in six suitcases. The money appeared to be drawn from drug and gunrunning transactions, and was apparently intended to finance the right-wing alliance in the elections (see *The New Republic*, "Inside Dope in El Salvador," by Craig Pyes and Laurie Becklund, April 15, 1985). The loss of this money put a serious crimp in the finances of the already-hurting right-wing alliance (most particularly the divided and weakened PCN, which lacked its past all-out military support).

The March 31 election led to an astonishing Christian Democratic sweep. Their percentage of the vote, estimated at 54 percent, was 13 percent over that in the 1982 Assembly elections, 10 percent higher than their returns in the first presidential elections, and matched that in the 1984 runoff against D'Aubuisson. The Christian Democrats won an estimated 33 of the 60 Assembly seats, and more than 200 of the 262 municipalities. (Before the elections the three main parties held these in about equal thirds, and the right had expected to

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win more than 200.) ARENA's vote share did not drop too much, about one percentage point to 29 percent; but the PCN's vote collapsed to a mere 8 percent. Ironically, because of the coalition between ARENA and PCN, ARENA will probably get only 13 seats to the 12 for PCN.

When looked at in absolute terms, something different appears. The overall vote dropped substantially, from a reported 1.4 or 1.5 million in the three earlier elections to less than a million. The 54 percent of the vote for the PDC actually reflected a number of votes equal to those it received in 1982 and the first 1984 elections, while ARENA's vote fell by a quarter and PCN's by two-thirds.

What happened? Obviously the voters dragooned to the polls in earlier elections had been more likely to go right than left. The decay of the PCN had been going on for years, but now with the army apparently neutral (in part because everyone *thought* the right would win) and without Guirola's money, that party's vote collapsed. And it is clear that guerrilla sympathizers, who voted this time, voted for the PDC.

Finally, the idea of negotiations was very popular. Even in the incredible circumstances of El Salvador, one poll showed that 51 percent of the population answered in favor of a dialogue to end the war (the FDR-FMLN position) while only 10 percent wanted the war to be carried on to victory. Guillermo Ungo of the FDR told American television that "the elections were good for Duarte and good for us."

Elections don't end things in El Salvador: they begin things. ARENA immediately challenged the results to the right-wing dominated election commission. But the army and the executive committee of the PCN both supported the election results. The Christian Democratic victory deprives the right of the governmental foothold it has held since 1982, reducing it back to the (hardly insignificant) power of the army, the oligarchy, and the death squads. But all these sectors are now more than ever dependent upon the United States.

THE OPPORTUNITY to break the stalemate in El Salvador now exists, but the stalemate in Washington continues. A coherent policy requires agreement between Congress and the executive, but a real agreement is further away than ever.

Some of the responsibility for this rests upon the Democrats and the Congress: concerned primarily with American nonintervention; desperately afraid of a "new Vietnam"; apparently more concerned with the *appearances* of our policy than with its reality; underestimating the links between forces in Cuba, Nicaragua, and El Salvador; and in some cases unwilling to face the grisly nature and behavior of some of the groups involved in the Salvadoran revolution. (Just because Reagan exaggerates those links does not mean that there are *none*; just because Communist plotting is not the only or even the main reason for events in Central America does not mean that it does not exist.)

Much more of the responsibility rests, however, with the Reagan administration, itself like the Salvadoran government in uneasy stalemate between center and right-wing forces. The Reagan administration has substituted a "big lie" technique ("totalitarian Nicaragua, democratic El Salvador") for any attempt at real explanation of the choices and issues facing American policy. It has tried to bully those who differ from its policies rather than to reason with them. As one administration figure put it, "The two main alternatives — outright military intervention or a political solution — are both unacceptable, but there's no agreement on what else to do." The administration has substituted wishful thinking for optimism. (Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts: "true optimism is rooted in the analysis of a problem. . . . Wishful thinking springs from something inside the observer rather than from the problem. It is a feeling one has despite the facts.")

Besotted by right-wing ideologies about "private development" which are then applied to gun-toting drug-running killers with more connections to feudal aristocracy and Nazism than to capitalist entrepreneurs or industrializers, the New Right spends its energies against figures like Duarte, who with all his faults is the only hope for a peaceful solution to this war. Top CIA analysts like John Horton are forced from office because they won't write reports to suit Reaganite ideology.

Some "realists" like Edward Luttwak suggest that "the United States can permit the Salvadorans to prevail by using their traditional methods — which simply entail killing as many people as they can until there are no guerrillas left" (*Harper's*, April 1985). That policy has just been carried out in Guatemala, and was carried out in El Salvador in 1932. Modern El Salvador, however, is more developed, the country cannot be quelled by its own military *unless* the United States is willing to back it.

It's time to be truly "realistic." Take a look at the Iberian peninsula, where the American government and the right long backed Franco and Salazar. Yet who would say that the goals of humanity *and* of American policy are not better served by the Social Democratic governments of Felipe Gonzalez and Mario Soares? If the Reaganites had been making American policy toward Costa Rica in 1948, one wonders if they would have supported the dictatorial government against the Social Democratic revolution.

Unable to back the slaughter some of them would like, and unwilling to take the risks of political accommodation, the Reaganites have been willing to blame their own failings on other actors. Everyone who does not agree with the administration is "naive" in believing that it is possible to have an accommodation between the various forces in El Salvador. The White House has now turned around and made the exact same proposal for Nicaragua that the FDR-FMLN had suggested for El Salvador! Apparently the Reaganites have now adopted in reverse that old Communist principle, "what's ours is ours, what's yours we share."

Whether by hypocrisy or bullying, the Reaganites seem unwilling not only to risk coalition-building in El Salvador, but even at home. Yet if they continue to entertain fantasies of victories to be won without direct American intervention, to imagine they can drive their nails with sponges of rhetoric, then they will have missed the great opportunity which the people have just given them.

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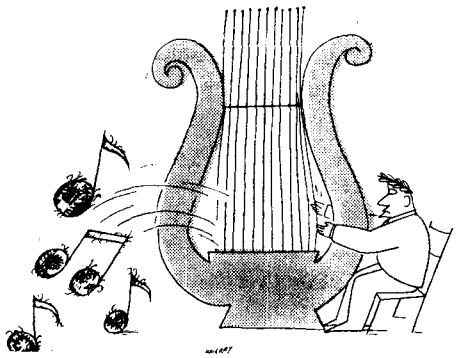

Dissonance over church music

READERS REPLY TO THOMAS DAY

A hilarious misjudgment

St. Paul, Minn.

To the Editors: I believe that Thomas Day is ignorant of the topic he addresses in his surprisingly sarcastic article, "When the Congregation Prays Twice" [March 8]. He has incorrectly loaded all the music contained in three volumes of *Glory and Praise* under the title "St. Louis Jesuits." Yet his illustrations come from music by other composers, not us. He seems blissfully unaware that there is a difference.

This hurts, since I agree heartily with at least one of the points he is trying to make, and have worked diligently to exemplify it in my music. So have my three companion "St. Louis Jesuits" (though, since I am writing this letter, I will speak mostly about my own compositions). How odd to be railed against for what we have not done and have tried our best to counter.

An easy place to see the unresearched quality of Day's complaints is in his gratuitous assertion that "St. Louis Jesuit" music is "treacherously difficult for an ordinary congregation." This is a hilarious misjudgment of our music, though it may be true of other pieces in the same genre. One of the most remarked-upon qualities of the "Jesuit" hymns is the ease with which congregations learn them, together with the longstaying nature of the melodies. "We learn them fast, and we do not tire of them," say letters from all over the English-speaking world. Thomas Day could have known that about our music if he had tried.

But Day is content to use "St. Louis Jesuits" as a generic logo for all music of a congregational nature that he dislikes. Thus, at my expense, he makes a very good point that I myself made in print almost five years ago. I said in *Pastoral Music* that liturgical pieces cannot have a "me" preoccupation, but must be apt for communal praying and singing. Texts should be marked, I said, "by their ability to be assimilated, to be spoken by all." This ability is an identifying characteristic and is the basic critical standard we have "for selecting music for liturgies" (June-July, 1980, p. 45). Egoism, sentimentalism, preoccupation with self undermine the common ground upon which a congregation stands. Day agrees and now urges the same, five years later.

This belief has been a main principle for all the liturgical music that I and my companions have written. I agree that there has been other music, from the 1960's onward, that has tended toward subjectivism, even as our culture has. But I would invite Thomas Day to examine the text and music for pieces of mine such as "Rise Up Jerusalem," "Come to the Water," "For You Are My God," "One Bread One Body," or "May We Praise You," among many others, to see the orientation toward God, and toward God among his people that I am referring to. With a bit of detachment, Day could be open to these examples not of what he and I both oppose, but of what we are urging.

The common nature of liturgical prayer has been a main reason that I and the others have chosen Scripture or a close paraphrase of it for nearly every piece we have written. Day remarks that "personal" music does not become common prayer by inserting scriptural phrases. I agree. But if music attempts to be true to the passage of Scripture it is setting, it will tend away from privatism and toward commonality. That which makes the many people one is described and contained in the word of Scripture. If the music can carry that word, the seeds of Christian unity will already be present. The music will not be about "me" but about God and the ways God gathers us to one. I would offer for Day's examination my pieces "The Cry of the Poor" and "Our Help Is from the Lord" for examples of exact translations of psalms set to music.

Thomas Day may actually not understand the deep-rooted unity that Scripture provides. He offers a more shallow source: communal music has always used the words "we" and "us," he says,

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whereas private devotional types make use of "I" and "me." But the psalms use the "I" words, and psalms are the official prayer of the church. When the psalmist says "my life ebbs away: all my bones are disjointed; my heart is melting away like wax," he is not promoting personalistic devotion. Within these "me" words is a prototype of human persons struggling for God. Jesus, the source of our unity, is described by Gospel writers with the very words of this psalm. Obviously it is not the use or non-use of "I" words that promotes congregational unity, it is the breadth and scope with which they are used. I would suggest my pieces "I Will Sing of the Lord," "I Rejoiced When I Heard Them Say," "Only in God" (Will My Soul be at Rest), and "This Is My Body" as attempts to achieve this scope, while still employing first person singular pronouns.

But I think one of the major sticking points for Thomas Day is that of emotions in music. E.M. Forster said, in a diatribe, that every Englishman "has been taught at his public school that feeling is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow, or open his mouth too wide when he talks — his pipe might fall out if he did." A caustic view of the British, but perhaps not so far from Day's own prejudice about worship. Day's tactless characterizations of congregational music (he calls it "folk mass" music, or, inaccurately, "St. Louis Jesuit" music) point to some aversion toward open feelings. A "universal" liturgy, Day claims, will be "objective" in tone, "dignified," in order to "appeal to the multitude." Must all worshippers then be taught that feeling is bad form? The psalmist never truncated human experience, never repressed feelings, and psalms have been integral to communal Catholic church worship through the centuries. They run all the way from high elation to dark depression. How can Day allow them in his objective liturgies? Are they not "kitsch"?

There is admittedly an added formality in ritual worship. Liturgy is not a club meeting. Such formality may well require a tilt toward what might be called "feeling," which is more profound and quiet, rather than toward "emotion," which is more toward the surface and less well-integrated with the whole of the human being. I have striven in all my music to mirror the felt meanings of the scriptural words, rather than to impose emotions. And without question, sentimentality is to be avoided, which I would define as emotions disconnected from the reasons for them: emotions for their own sake. This is the very attitude I have shunned as a plague upon worship and music, and yet it is the very thing that Day wrongly accuses me of in my music with the "St. Louis Jesuits." I would put forth my own "May We Praise You" or "Turn to Me" as two examples of felt prayer, as differentiated from emotion-laden or sentimental prayer.

Finally, I would question the overall helpfulness of such an unmannerly and uninformed article as Day's. Words like "moaning and self-caressing," "mush," "group therapy," "obnoxious boasting," and especially the repeated use of "kitsch," which literally means "garbage," do not emerge well from the mouth of a man who is promoting unity and dignity in religious worship. Such harshness may well betray an unruly bias within its author toward one type of worship and one only: the kind the author likes. This is not a help but a hindrance to our common search for effective liturgy.

JOHN FOLEY, S.J.
Composer in residence
College of St. Thomas
College of St. Catherine

A recommendation: the Episcopal hymnal

Pasadena, Calif.

To the Editors: The problem that Thomas Day raises may have no easy solution, but it seems to me the most efficient interim route to a "liturgy that proceeds with objective solemnity and a great sense of purpose" may be by way of the Episcopal hymnal.

This year St. Patrick's Day fell on a Sunday. Does American Catholicism have anything in its hymnal to match St. Patrick's hymn in the Episcopal hymnal, "I bind unto myself today/The strong Name of the Trinity"? The traditional Irish melody with its striding two-one measure is irresistible. Hear the last stanza:

I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, his might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need;
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, his shield to ward;
The Word of God to give me speech,
His heav'nly host to be my guard.

There are hymns in the Episcopal hymnal that rise into the Baptist registers where a Catholic's emotional voice begins to crack, but there are literally dozens that match or surpass the stanza above in the vigor and honesty of its emotion and doctrine.

And the music! During the centuries that followed Henry's Act of Supremacy, the Anglican church was able to call on the musical masters of every era: Bach, Haydn, Handel, Mendelssohn; nearer our own day Arthur Sullivan, Ralph Vaughan Williams. As an English-speaking communion, the Roman Catholic church has scarcely a century of free public life behind it and far less than that of anything approaching artistic sophistication. One may honor the courage that kept the old faith through so long a tribulation, but one need not sing the old songs if they are bad songs or, much worse, attempt to fill with the fruits of a summer workshop the silence that three centuries of kings and popes have imposed.

The Episcopal hymnal is as appropriate for Roman Catholic worship as the Oxford English Bible is. These songs are part of the patrimony of English-speaking people wherever they may be. They are in the public Christian domain. In the 1960s, American Catholics entered the public domain of their country as they never had before. For them, that change was at least as important as anything that John XXIII brought about. But like revolutionaries in the royal palace, they still seem reluctant to use all that is

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now theirs. The Episcopal hymnal — the musical heritage of Christianity in English — is theirs. Let them use it!

JACK MILES

Candidates for kitsch

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I enjoyed your article by Thomas Day on the need for suitable music in our churches.

Kitsch describes well a type of folk music that exists in our churches. But not all folk music is kitsch. In defense of the Saint Louis Jesuits, their songs do not qualify as good examples of kitsch as defined by Mr. Day. The bulk of these compositions are objective and scriptural. Nor did the Jesuits write "Only a Shadow" nor "Stay With Me" as implied in the article. A distinction must be made here because both of these tunes use subjective texts, thus making them candidates for the kitsch collection.

Glory and Praise is a collection of contemporary music whose only reason for being gathered into a book seems to be the use of guitar chords for every song. The Jesuit repertoire is included, but it is not solely their collection nor do "all tell of a very intimate love story" as stated in the article. Furthermore, the latest volume contains selections from the modal biblical psalms of Father Lucien Deiss, hardly associated with Victorian favorites. Mr. Day's words are well taken, and those parishes who are still singing the examples cited in his articles have much catching up to do. The recent compositions of Conry, DeBruyn, Joncas, Hautgen, Haas, Manion and Parker show us just how far from "kitsch" the folk movement has progressed.

(DR.) ELAINE J. RENDLER
Georgetown Center for Liturgy, Spirituality and the Arts

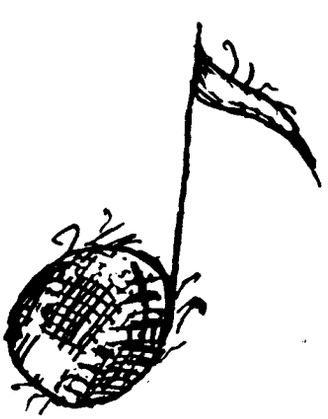
The need for thoroughly singable hymns

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: I am a musician, and a parish leader of song. I found Mr. Thomas Day's article to be exceedingly sad, but not for reasons I think the author would appreciate.

I agree with the premise: we still — badly — need good congregational hymns, hymns which are "objective" enough for common worship. Excessive stress on emotion makes a song self-conscious; it loses its place in things.

But to understand where we are today, and what we have to do, we have to judge *fairly* the contribution made by groups like the St. Louis Jesuits. They have attempted the perilous task of blending a needed warmth and legitimate emotion with a decidedly church orientation. Some of their efforts succeed; others do not. What we need to know — and I suspect the St. Louis Jesuits would be the first to help — is what succeeds, and why, as we can judge by a wide variety of opinion.



What Mr. Day gives us is the malicious declension: my lyricism, your sentimentality, his kitsch. He writes as if from a tower, and snobbery is no substitute for objective assessment.

Mr. Day seems to have had nothing but bad encounters with both music and musicians of what he calls revival kitsch. I have had the opposite experiences, and deny that soupy adjective to any but a few select hymns ("Isaiah 49" being one of them). "Be Not Afraid" *is* community oriented. My people sang "Hail Mary: Gentle Woman" almost as soon as we finished the rehearsal; they loved it and sang it well, *sans soloiste*. (The melody is about as "unpredictable" as "Silent Night.") In fact, my parishioners have skated fearlessly into those "treacherous" pages of *Glory and Praise*. They don't like all of the songs, but that's not the point. The situation is nowhere as melodically grim as Mr. Day portrays it.

Furthermore, after telling us what he doesn't like, he tells us what he likes: "Holy God." What chutzpah! (Has Mr. Day ever noticed how many men drop out at the end of that hymn because it's too high?)

But who cares what Mr. Day or I care — personally — about this or that hymn? What we need is a more balanced critique, to help us move on with some confidence. It's time for such an article (articles, books, whatever).

Mr. Day might be the one to write it if he could manage to be fairer to people.

Besides, as Joan Rivers would say: "Can we talk?" In every conceivable aspect of sung liturgy — weddings, funerals, all of it — it is not "folk" singers or guitarists that ordinary people have trouble with; it is the supercilious condescending lover of German chorales who basically hates people because they can't appreciate good music when they hear it.

WILLIAM A. BURKE

Grand Rapids, Mich.

To The Editors: I will accept Thomas Day's low assessment of current church music even though to my untutored ears it seems very superior to that of the "novena hymns" to which he compares it. However, I would be ungrateful to some of the composers he denigrates if I did not publicly acknowledge that their hymns have been a great blessing to me and have enhanced and enlivened our parish liturgies.

Life is very hard for most people and one of the most encouraging messages those of us in the pews have picked up in recent years is that God desires to be our *friend*.

DOROTHY G. CLINGMAN

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Pretense to authority

Florissant, Mo.

To the Editors: Thomas Day's article denounces the "sweet sentimentality" of the newer liturgical music in the church today (i.e. *Glory and Praise* by the St. Louis Jesuits or the music of the Weston monks). He goes so far as to call it "mush," "kitsch," and "egocentric," and he suggests such music is of questionable suitability for liturgies.

Day then offers options he describes as "dignified, conventional, sacred music, even Gregorian chant." Certainly much is to be said for the "best case scenario" Day proposes, however, he would do well to take his own article to heart. If "it all begins with the person in the mirror," as he says, then the extreme *egocentricity* of setting oneself up as judge and jury becomes obvious. To my mind, Day makes light of music which has been, overall, a positive and enhancing factor to Catholic worship in recent years — regardless of its "subjective" or "objective" character.

Because of the diversity of music available to pastoral musicians today, and the spectrum of backgrounds of liturgical planners, it is a mistake for one to pretend to be enough of an authority to deem what is "suitable" and "appropriate" for services where one does not know the nature of the congregation, the musical resources available (if any) and the preferences of the pastor (which is often a highly influential factor).

If, as Day says, there is anything wrong with music that is *romantic* or *sentimental*, then let's consult the antonyms: aloof, frigid, timorous.

ELLEN M. NEWMAN

An encouraging word

Decorah, Iowa

To The Editors: Thanks to Thomas Day for his analysis of *kitsch* and how it has overtaken Catholic worship. Unfortunately, it is going to take more than a few protests to correct things. Catholics need a good, standard hymn book of high quality (which does not at all mean "difficult" or "high-brow," but just the opposite — accessible to the full range of worshipers). Such a book would represent a rich heritage from classical medieval hymns (e.g., "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name," "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded," "Savior of the Nations Come") to the enormously popular and thoroughly singable hymns of an Isaac Watts and a Charles Wesley. Obviouly, too, the best of modern hymns set to music by such composers as Vaughan Williams. What should on principle not be included are the "songs" Day calls *kitsch*, or what we Protestants call "camp songs." It would be a good idea also to ban guitars for a couple of years and get rid for good of the ubiquitous song leaders. Let the organ, even if only a small electronic, be used at every Mass (or, in parochial schools, the piano).

See to it that the school children are taught to sing good hymns exactly at the age when they are most apt to take to them (i.e., the grade school years). Above all, see that the hymns sung are sturdy ones focusing on the acts of God on our behalf. That a good hymn book can be produced and that it can prove successful in virtually every sort of parish is attested by the remarkable success, for instance, of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

My wife has been for twenty years a happy and proud parochial school teacher. Her one continued complaint has been the poor quality of hymns sung with special reference to *Glory and Praise*. A friend and colleague of mine, a good practicing Catholic entirely at home with his middle-class background, jokes about the music encountered at most Masses as a form of penance — "the price you have to pay to stay Catholic." At the Lutheran college where I teach with 10 percent Catholic students I hear them complain too about the "silly songs" at Mass. And since many of them also come to weekday chapel where we use a good hymn book they know that students can sing with lustiness if given something decent to sing.

Catholics worked so hard for liturgical renewal. Let them now put some work on hymnody and take lessons from anyone who can teach them. After all, if we only sing "me-centered *kitsch*" our whole religion will become what we sing.

LEIGH D. JORDAHL

Reply from Thomas Day

To the Editors: Attend any Roman Catholic downstairs liturgy. (Let us call it that.) Watch and listen carefully to the following: (1) the "voice of God" in song and (2) the *way* the congregation sings "I" and "me."

Notice how often the congregation or the performers up front sing the "voice of God" (i.e., his utterances in Scripture). Gone are the days when Judaism and Christianity put these words in a special language and a special chant to remind us of his "otherness." Today, even in the "new, improved" versions of the downstairs liturgy, we hear this "voice of God" in casual, la-de-da tunes, as if this were the most commonplace thing in the world. Indeed, God is our friend, but that familiar style of music indicates that he is also under our control.

The "I" and "me" of Scripture, especially in the psalms, have been successfully set to music in a number of different ways, to name just a few: chanted psalm tones, Anglican plainchant, Protestant hymns that paraphrase Scripture (e.g., "A Mighty Fortress"), and, of course, the very useful modern versions by Gelineau and Deiss. In each one of these cases, the "me" in the psalms becomes a very big "me," a collective statement of the whole assembly. The "proclaiming" style of music channels the private subjectivity of the words into something public, communal, and universal. In downstairs music, the "I" and "me" of Scripture are always embraced in intimate, snug-and-warm melodies that suggest the coziness of the (private) living room, rather than the work of the whole diverse assembly.

If we want to understand why Judaism

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and Christianity often resisted this type of music, we will find insights in anthropology and genuine folk music. Ethnomusicologists pointed out long ago that authentic folk singers, in many cultures, deliver love songs, tragic ballads, great epics, and so forth in a detached, restrained style. The emotion compressed into this music might be great enough to make you cry, but the singer seems to be objective about the whole thing. This style is so common in folk music perhaps because, when they perform, the singers are not "themselves," entertaining us. Instead, they represent the whole community, the collective memory of the whole culture.

A lector reading the epistle, a bishop reciting the Eucharistic Prayer, and a backwoods folk singer performing an old ballad can be quite moving and yet remain models of objectivity. They know that as soon as they try to radiate warmth, as soon as they try to project the *felt* meaning of the text, the words disappear behind the display of personality. Objectivity, to be sure, can easily turn into cold rigidity, but at least it insures that the event belongs to everyone. Downstairs music, in spite of its many qualities, does not have this folk objective quality, this ability to go beyond personality. It is television, video music; it is the product of a culture that has become accustomed to watching singers stand behind a microphone and emotionally squeeze out his felt meanings of words. (There are three excellent Catholic hymnals on the market in the United States and you will not find this crooning music in any of them; the editors, with a great deal of experience behind them, realized that this type of music is just too erratic for a diverse congregation to sing.)

There is nothing new under the sun. Hassidic Jews broke away from "mainstream" Orthodoxy in part because of this matter of objective worship. Methodists left the Church of England and the Pietists (denouncing composers like J.S. Bach) walked away from Lutheranism over similar issues. What we are witnessing today is the development of a kind of loyal secession within Catholicism. The secession has been thriving largely because upstairs, "mainstream," "orthodox" Catholicism in the United States has a huge void where its liturgical music is supposed to be. There have been brave attempts to fill in this void but they often come to nothing when a parish staff (getting smaller every day) has to get through the ordeal of providing six or seven weekend liturgies for the convenience of a very demanding laity.

This secession, immensely proud of its ability to make scriptural texts glow with feeling, nevertheless has an ugly side to it. Wherever the secessionists have taken over, that St. Louis Jesuits' "sound" is the canon of taste, the law of the land. Period. The contempt for any kind of religious music that does not sound like "Be Not Afraid" is breathtaking. There is a distinct form of anti-intellectualism here and it is frequently directed against anyone who can read bass clef.

I was unfair. I have to apologize for mentioning the St. Louis Jesuits in the same breath with some inferior music which they did not write. But I do insist that there is a connection. Whether they

like it or not, they have become the symbol, the logo, of secessionist Catholicism at its best and at its worst. If someone in the parochial school decides that, henceforth, the children will learn only music in *Glory and Praise* or if the folk group treats the communion meditation as the summit of the parish's liturgical life, you may not object. The standard retort goes like this. "But can't you see? We are not like those hootenanny Catholics of the sixties. We follow the example set by the St. Louis Jesuits and the others who, for the first time in history, have written music that plumbs the depths of Scripture's meaning." If anyone eventually destroys the reputation of the Jesuit musicians from St. Louis, it will be their friends, not their detractors.

I have immense sympathy for the pastor who has to deal with the secessionists, the charismatics, the traditionalists, the revolutionaries, and highly emotional, obnoxiously opinionated people like myself. Somehow, he has to tiptoe across that minefield of controversy (which we can see in the above letters). He knows that, regardless of the nature of the congregation, liturgy means *work* of the people; he knows that it is not meant to be a series of comforting songs interrupted, now and then, by his talking; by the same token he knows that liturgy is not a showcase for talents of the ivory-tower, classically-trained musician.

Here is one suggestion (and I borrow from some letters). Let the pastor request a "musical moratorium" at perhaps one Sunday liturgy, and then let things begin at the beginning. For a few weeks or months let the singing, at that one liturgy, focus on the essential dialogue between celebrant and people, cantor and people — unaccompanied by either organ or guitar. Within reason, the singing should be simple, even stark, and the words should be the prescribed texts. (The *Sacramentary* and hymnals provide practical music. When in doubt, use a monotone.) Once this sung dialogue is established, once the people sense that they are a part of the work of liturgy, then the time is right to lift the moratorium, bring back the instruments, and proceed with the addition of other music. What this other music will be is anybody's guess (chant to rock 'n' roll), but, if the priorities are firmly established, it will be music that brings the factions together — joyous, assertive, sweat-producing, even charismatic *work* music, not daydream music.

There is only so much work that anyone can endure — and here is where the music of "the groups" comes in. This religious relaxation music is an excellent aid for private devotion; it teaches us more about Scripture than any book could ever hope to accomplish. But when we see it in church, right next to the collective, communal majesty of the Roman Rite, when we see the intimate and the banal in music blown up to large proportions, only one word can describe the situation: kitsch. THOMAS DAY

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The world's biggest debtor

JORDAN BISHOP

THE PRESS called it the Shamrock Summit and all agreed that it made great show business: Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada, welcomed Ronald Reagan in Quebec City, on Saint Patrick's Day. Business was brief and boring. Mr. Mulroney agreed to undertake the renewal of the DEW line radar network; Mr. Reagan agreed to fight protectionism; and both agreed to work towards something like free trade. Striking by its absence, however, was the single item in U.S.-Canadian relations which has dominated the Canadian media for the past six months: the value of the U.S. dollar. At the time of the meeting the U.S. dollar was trading at over one dollar and forty-two cents in Canadian funds, or as the Canadian media usually put it, *our* dollar is only worth seventy-two cents.

With some carefully nuanced provisos, economists attributed this to the continued high real interest rates in the United States, to competition for money induced by the biggest budget deficit in U.S. history, and to the neatly-timed (for the 1984 elections) deficit-driven recovery of the U.S. economy.

In fact, many European governments have been wringing their hands over the strength of the U.S. dollar for some time now. Most recently, it was supposed to be an item on the agenda for Margaret Thatcher's visit to Washington, but it appears to have been lost in the shuffle.

Canadian governments, Liberal and Tory, have attempted to defend the value of the Canadian dollar through high interest rates, even though this has acted as a brake on the Canadian economy. The argument has been that if this is not done, the smart short-term money will all flow into the United States, pushing up even further the value of the U.S. dollar. At the same time, U.S. interest rates have increased the burden of debtor nations while attracting money away from local economies and into the United States. For many foreign observers, Mr. Reagan is borrowing the world's money to finance his arms race. As the minister of planning in the already bankrupt Bolivian government complained last August: "Why doesn't the United States pay for its own fiscal deficit and war costs? Why do we have to cover the North American deficit?" What the Bolivian minister said, others have been thinking, but they are powerless in the face of U.S. policy, or lack thereof.

The strength of the U.S. dollar, as seen from abroad, is not a one-sided affair. For those whose memories are long enough, the world went through a period in the 1930s when competition for cheaper currencies was popularly called the politics of "beggar thy neighbor." A devaluation made the products of a given economy cheaper for those who lived in other economies. When practiced competitively, it has the same effect as a price war. In fact, it is a price war, with the added advantage that those who practice it cannot be accused of dumping or of protectionism. They are simply obeying the laws of the market.

Presently, this dynamic is working against the export sector of the American economy. The expensive dollar has made everything else cheap, so that Americans have been buying more and selling less. The American trade deficit has yet to catch up with the budget deficit, but according to the Department of Commerce, the trade deficit passed $100 billion in 1984, and appears to be growing. The cost in jobs to the American economy has been estimated at two million.

Meanwhile, in Canada, spokesmen for the export sector of the economy say that things have never been better. Only in the resource sector has there been trouble, since Australia, Sweden, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile — to name a few — can undercut even the devalued Canadian dollar.

All this goes on even as the new Tory government in Canada continues to explore the idea of free trade with the United States. In this context, protectionism is an ideological taboo. South of the border, the evils of protectionism form one of the ongoing themes of the Reagan administration. The present strength of the U.S. dollar forms a more effective barrier to the sale of U.S. products abroad than do tariffs or import quotas imposed by other countries. Offshore goods are cheap and American goods abroad are expensive. Wage bills for foreign industry are cheaper than are wage bills for American industry. Many argue that the trade imbalance comes not because of any policies or actions on the part of other countries, but as a direct result of policies of the Reagan administration.

If Mr. Reagan insists on staying the course, on the U.S. dollar standing tall, why complain? From the Canadian side of the border it looks as if the U.S. government is discriminating against its own industry. So why not live with it? If there is no real choice, why are we upset?

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Why indeed? One reason for complaint is that the present situation is inherently unstable. The week after the Shamrock Summit the price of gold rose by nearly forty dollars in one day. The same speculators who are now cleaning up at the expense of other currencies would turn on the American dollar at the slightest sign of weakness. In such a situation investors, entrepreneurs, and people in general are reluctant to move. Long-term planning becomes difficult. This is apparently not a problem for Mr. Reagan, who doesn't believe in economic planning anyway, except for the defense industry. But it creates an extremely volatile situation abroad. It is like setting up shop next to a wounded dinosaur. The risk is destabilizing. Even buying a house entails some heavy decision-making: does one go for a one-year mortgage, or three years, or five? Since the ultra-high rates of a few years ago, many, perhaps a majority of Canadian mortgages are routinely renegotiated every year. In such a climate, who is going to tie up money in capital investment? The export boom may bring in some money, but coming out of a depression — or perhaps still in one — most plants are operating at well below capacity.

The world's currencies are all floating, and the seas are hardly calm. Mr. Reagan's dollar is standing tall, but even as money moves into the United States to take advantage of still-high interest rates — incidently forcing interest rates in Britain up to fourteen percent — a lot of people still remember when gold went up to nine hundred dollars.

Economists appear to be holding their cards very close to the belt. Journalists are less prudent, but still divided. No one in his or her right mind would gamble on the American budget deficit going down, and this probably means that American interest rates will stay high. Nothing seems more certain than that Mr. Reagan will continue to finance his end of the arms race by borrowing the world's money, even as the United States moves into Brazil's position as the world's biggest debtor. From abroad, this is viewed with some apprehension, and with a great deal of frustration. Other governments are simply not in a position to do anything about it. Mr. Reagan has made it clear that his responsibility does not extend to the impact of his policies on other economies. It is very much a question of "pull up the ladder, Jack, I'm aboard." At the same time, the fact that an over-valued American dollar gives other countries a trade advantage is resented at home. With two million American jobs at stake, labor groups pressure for protectionism. And American suggestions of voluntary restraint are resented by countries only too aware that the crisis did not arise because of *their* policies.

Mr. Reagan does not believe in protectionism. He has promised Mr. Mulroney that he will fight against it. Mr. Reagan puts his faith in the market. On the other hand, foreigners, including Canadians, are perplexed by Mr. Reagan's support for balanced budget legislation, and the Republican Party's platform calling for a return to the gold standard. The chances of either of these becoming a reality are about equal. We are left with the market, and the market in currencies is both fickle and volatile.

Brian Mulroney and his Tory government, with an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, have the power to keep their side of any bargains made. Mr. Reagan may have some troubles with Congress. Under Tory government, Canada has moved closer to the United States, if that were possible, although there are few tangible results for Canada. Mulroney agreed to put off any action on the vexing question of acid rain for six months to a year. It is apparently a moot question whether or not Canada will be involved in Star Wars. And the hardest question, the one about the tall-standing dollar, was not answered. It was never asked.

Screen

UNTENDER MERCIES

KING DAVID FROM THE OUTBACK

AUSTRALIAN Director Bruce Beresford has made two fine films: *Breaker Morant* (1980) and *Tender Mercies* (1983). As a result, it's difficult to believe he could have made the clunker, *King David*, or could not have, with tighter direction of performance or better editing, spared us some of its worst scenes. These scenes, unfortunately, renew an old cliché: they are worth seeing for their badness. When David (Richard Gere) celebrates his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, we expect a gleeful, acrobatic dance. Instead, Beresford presents Gere as a naked ape in a diaper doing the twist. Shortly after, when Gere discusses building the temple, Beresford lets him talk as if he's opening a new line of men's fashions at Bloomingdale's; the earnestness is all put-on, the gestures all off-key. At the end of *King David*, Beresford attaches a totally unnecessary and cursory wrap-up that spoils the film's one spiritual theme: David's hope of seeing God before he dies. It is no time for laughter, but that's exactly what the postscript style and Gere's see-through aging as David at deathbed evokes. It's stunning that Beresford allows his art to be so compromised.

The disaster of *King David* is all the more notable considering the real talent of nearly everyone involved. Beresford has attempted to film a literal, non-propagandistic version of *The Book of Samuel*, *First Chronicles*, and *First* and *Second Kings*, and he at times achieves scenes of grim, stolid grandeur. His lead in *Breaker Morant*, Edward Woodward, ably plays King Saul, a tragic mix of need, pride, and wrath; the rest of the cast includes English and Commonwealth actors, with long and extensive stage and film credits, who are able to give the archaic diction of the screenplay convincing authenticity and cadence. Of greatest note is Jack Klaff, a South African with a bit role in *Star Wars* but extensive theater experience, who makes Jonathan, Saul's son and David's friend, the sympathetic center of their rivalry. Alice Krige (the Jewish runner's actress girlfriend in *Chariots of Fire*) is also on hand, but since Scripture is short on women's roles, she only gets to flare

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her nostrils a bit as Bathsheba.

Major credit for undertaking the film, and perhaps major blame as well, goes to Paramount studios. Though responsible for the sham *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Friday the 13th, Part V*, Paramount has also tried to innovate more than usual *within* the Hollywood system. Last fall it released two well-meant dramas of contemporary American life, *First Born* and *Falling in Love*. Paramount is also responsible for *Witness*, a somewhat-above-average cops-and-robbers thriller, for which it hired Australian Peter Weir. Apparently, the same story holds for *King David*, conceived by the studio as a modern, less sentimental version of the biblical films of the fifties, then farmed out to the Australian Beresford. Unlike a De Mille extravaganza, this syncretistic *King David* is no white hats vs. black hats vision of sacred history. As screenwriter Andrew Birkin points out, all the older movies "stopped short at what happened when the Israelities got to the promised land." What Beresford and Paramount have provided, albeit unevenly, is a historically accurate, sometimes terrifying vision of blood-thirsty righteousness. They claim not to have made a religious film, but an "adventure epic," and, to a small degree, perhaps they have succeeded.

Unfortunately, someone lost courage and forced the choice of Gere for the lead. The studio's publicity claims Beresford suggested it, but since Gere starred in the previous Paramount hit, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, and since Beresford mostly has "empire" connections evident in the choice of the other actors, it is difficult to believe the official studio line. Gere is not *in*capable; provide him a role with plenty of narcissism and self-obsession, and he shines. Even as *King David*, Gere attains some dignity in moments of grief over the death of Absalom and guilt over the murder of Uriah. But he fails to bring to life the spiritual presence of David, one of the most exuberant, lyrical, and troubled souls in biblical history. No doubt Paramount and producer Martin Elfand, also of *An Officer and a Gentleman*, demanded that Beresford use Gere as a device to lure the young American movie market. What they got in hulk they lost in soul.

A second mistake weakens the spiritual content of the film: Beresford tries to tell too much, and thus weakens whatever moral focus *King David* might have had. The judges — Samuel (Dennis Quilley) and Nathan (Niall Buggy) — are stony enough, but they lack *aura*. When Samuel chooses David as once and future king, by juggling from magic stones, he might as well be playing Obi-wan Kenobe. Periodically, one of the judges is able to convey a sense of strangeness, of special possession, and of time lapsed, between then and now, in human perceptions of the divine. But then Beresford never stops the action long enough for these impressions to deepen.

At face value, the film is somewhat anti-religious, at times provocatively so. In this light, the start of *King David* might be its "high" point. After Saul's victory over the Amalekites, we observe Samuel storming into his council room, angrily rebuking a guard in his path with the claim that God's law is more important than the king's. Once inside, Samuel reprimands Saul and points to the king of the Amalekites, abject in chains on the floor before him. But it's here that director Beresford springs his surprise. Samuel is angry that Saul is imposing a treaty on the captive king, and considering *mercy* for the king's wives, trembling outside in a courtyard. Without much ado, Samuel seizes a sword and lops off the king's head. Beresford's upset of expectations in this scene provides a perversely marvelous touch. Because the scene resembles so many others where churchmen reprimand statesmen for their lack of compassion (cf. *Beckett*, *A Man for All Seasons*), at first we feel sure that Samuel will judge Saul by our standards. Instead, we get the first of many holy decapitations in the film. Samuel then proceeds, naturally,to demand death for *all* the Amalekites, the first of many zealous exhortations for genocide against the native inhabitants of the promised land.

King David places this pogrom in context: everyone else behaves roughly, and there are some scenes of "epic adventure" (as in *Conan the Barbarian*) that make one value the comfort and relative safety of the theater of a modern city. Nevertheless, *King David* also makes a special point (through a short speech of the Philistine king) that it is the Israelites alone who insist on not tolerating other gods. Why their God was thought so special — what vision, for example, possessed the judges — is never suggested as a possible reason for his jealousy and their ardor. Although *King David* tells some harsh truths, the film never examines what the Scripture was about.

Ironically, such treatment of the Bible will make *King David* least popular among moral majoritarians and staunch supporters of Israeli territorial claims. Its treatment of Scripture-thumping fundamentalism — and cold blooded slaughter of Hittites, Moabites, and anyone else in "the land between the Lebanon and Egypt" — provides one of the most astringent satires on theocratic butchery since *Candide*.

I not only object to the half-truth of Beresford's treatment, but also to its lack of imaginative depth. For the maker of *Tender Mercies* — a sensitive, understated presentation of spiritual rebirth — *King David* is astonishingly external and shallow. Both Beresford and his fellow-Australian Weir must beware of the temptations proffered by Paramount: forced casting and gigantic scope might dilute the integrity of their whole vision. It's traditional that Hollywood has periodic crazes for "art" directors and tries to swallow them whole. Will this be the fate of the Australian new wave of the late seventies? Once the English documentary master John Grierson observed this happening to Josef von Sternberg (the German maverick captured by Paramount in the 1930s). "When a director dies," Grierson wrote of von Sternberg, "he becomes a photographer."

TOM O'BRIEN

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Art

CARAVAGGIO AT THE MET

MORE THAN FRUIT & FLOWERS

The life of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) reads like a Zola novel: son of a mason/architect with aristocratic connections, fledgling and struggling still-life painter in Rome, protégé of an intellectual and probably homosexual circle, denizen of the eternal city's courts and jails, murderer, fugitive, and in the end, victim of mistaken identity and a tragic death. He was as well the greatest religious painter of his time, perhaps of all time. Turning away from the artistic conventions of the sixteenth century — a preference for idealized figures and for depictions of exalted sacred mysteries — Caravaggio chose humanity as he saw it and personal experience as the basis for his religious imagery.

The exhibition "The Age of Caravaggio" held at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art from February to April this year, and presently on its way to Naples, was but another indication of growing interest in his life and art. Comprised of ninety-nine paintings by predecessors, contemporaries, and Caravaggio himself, the show introduced his art to a larger public and forced scholars to confront problems posed by this man and his work. It is to the credit of the organizing committee, Sir John Pope-Hennessey and Keith Christiansen at the Met and the late Dr. Raffaello Causa of Naples, that the show presented many of the problems — the origins of Caravaggio's style, the uniqueness of his work, and the attribution of questionable pictures. But in its attempt to address these problems, the showing raised new questions about the present method of art history as practiced in such exhibitions.

The exhibit's strength was thirty-eight paintings, either securely or tentatively attributed to the master, as thorough a representation as could be expected these days. The major religious paintings from the Contarelli and Cerasi chapels, and the large altarpieces in Rome, Sicily, and Malta, too fragile to travel, were absent. Nor were all the promised paintings delivered: the *Still-Life* from Milan and the *Fortune Teller* from Rome never arrived for the Met exhibit, leaving us without key examples of Caravaggio's early work. But among the works that were present, marvels abounded. The newly-cleaned Metropolitan *Musicians* and the Uffizi *Bacchus* are paeans to sensuality: aural, tactile, and ultimately optical. A version of the *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* (1596) showed Caravaggio's increasing powers of execution, his interest in momentary expression, and his developing awareness of the power of light.

The religious paintings of the early period, particularly the *Stigmatization of St. Francis* and *Judith and Holofernes*, echoed the secular works: The St. Francis is as serene as the later Bacchus, the Judith as animated as the boy bitten by the lizard. The early work of Caravaggio should be seen as a piece, a wide-ranging essay on role reversal done primarily for one patron, Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte. All the men are depicted as passive objects of desire, while the women (Judith, Mary Magdalene, St. Catherine of Alexandria), are active participants in accomplishing God's plan.

The sensuality of Caravaggio's early works marks two of his most physically impressive and disturbing mature paintings: *Amor Vincit Omnia* (1602/3) and the first *Supper at Emmaus* (1601/2). In the first, the classical Eros becomes an eroticized Puck, at his feet objects representing worldly power and fame in disarray before his antic power. The *Supper* has now been placed in a more secure historical context, deriving from Northern Italian precedents; yet it is still so shocking no precedent can adequately explain its power. The lumpy Christ, reminiscent of the Amor grown to young manhood, the precisely, even obsessively painted elaborate banquet, shared with the astounded disciples and observed by an indifferent innkeeper, all reflect a unity of the predicatable and the bizarre that is Caravaggio's own.

The show demonstrated that Caravaggio's power as a painter is not predicated solely on his novelty. The second version of the *Supper at Emmaus*, completed some five years later, is more traditional, more reverent, and yet more mysterious than its predecessor. The innkeeper is joined by a serving woman — they anchor the composition and mitigate some of the formal and existential uneasiness of the earlier work. The apostles no longer theatrically respond to Christ's revelation. Dinner is now herbs, wine, and bread. With the meal simplified and the responses controlled, Caravaggio underlined the power of Christ's presence and set us the task of contemplating the divine in matter, the sacramental in the profane.

Detail from "The Supper at Emmaus," from *The Age of Caravaggio*, the Metropolitan Museum of Art/Electa/Rizzoli, $50, 352 pp.

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The Met exhibit also displayed sixty works by Caravaggio's Northern Italian predecessors, and his Roman and Neopolitan contemporaries — the roots and the context for his art. The exhibition's first two rooms attempted to demonstrate what the young Caravaggio saw as a painter in Milan, the building blocks of his style and his imagery. At this it failed. Few of the works displayed had any direct relationship with Caravaggio or his paintings in the later part of the show. This may well have had to do with availability, but works like Savoldo's *St. Matthew and the Angel* should have been supplemented by others like Titian's *Venus at Her Toilet* or Veronese's *Supper at Emmaus* which would have clarified Caravaggio's imagery.

The next three rooms dedicated to Caravaggio's contemporaries also suffered from a lack of thrust. Taken as a whole, they were as good a show of Italian painting 1600-1620 as we might hope to see. But their relationship to the Caravaggio work which followed was tenuous. Only the catalogue entries by Charles Dempsey on Annibale Carracci's *Dead Christ* made any serious attempt to relate the two sections of the exhibit.

While the addition of these two introductory sections gave the show "blockbuster" proportions, they did not add impact. In fact, they diluted the power of the master's work itself. From the didactic material and the extensive catalogue, from the addition of the preliminary sections, from the range of educational and scholarly activities surrounding the show, it is clear that the exhibition was meant to teach, to explain even in vague terms the meaning of Caravaggio's art and — as eloquently stated in the introductory essay by Richard Spear in *The Age of Caravaggio* (Metropolitan Museum of Art/ Electa/Rizzoli, $50) — the fissure between his life and his work. As Spear points out, the idea of the romantic rebel artist often associated with Caravaggio distorts his relationship to the artistic culture of his time. Everything he made did not spring from his head or from nature full-blown. Moreover, Spear claims Caravaggio's work cannot be considered confessional in the narrow sense, neither as a frank admission of his homosexual proclivities nor as a statement of his personal lack of faith.

But in a larger sense, it must be considered confessional — an affirmation of the role of the self in making art, not narrowly defined as the product of sheer will and rebellion, but sensitive to issues of dislocation and representation, self and author, audience and truth not unlike those broached by contemporary post-structuralist thinkers. This show attempted to suggest that the art of Caravaggio was primarily the product of influences, and was novel primarily in a particular context. The power of the art in the last four rooms belied this. It deserved a more principled and imaginative handling than it was given by the exhibition catalogue, a book like Sartre's *Saint-Genet* that discusses the complex personal, social, and cultural forces in the work. One can only hope the paintings exhibited will encourage this new direction in the study of Caravaggio's art and the larger issues it raised. JOSEPH C. FORTE

(Joseph C. Forte is professor of art history at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York.)

Stage

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

FARCE AND FAILED COMEDY

UGLY DUCKLINGS have been turning into swans all over town lately, with varying degrees of aesthetic and commercial success. This transformation, in one guise or another, is at the heart of many contemporary comedies. Characters discover their true selves, assert the selves they have always suspected were there, have their worth (wit, charm, whatever) recognized by significant and insignificant others. One of the most persistent forms of self-discovery comedy is the coming-of-age play, and that is what Neil Simon offers in *Biloxi Blues*. Since the comedy carries the magic Simon name and since it has the blessing of Frank Rich in the pages of the *New York Times*, the play is almost certain to have a long and profitable run. I cannot for the life of me understand why.

Simon's quasi-autobiographical hero, Eugene Morris Jerome (he frequently identifies himself by all three names), had his first coming-of-age in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, which has been on Broadway for more than two years. In that comedy, the outside world impinged on his baseball and sexual dreams. Now, a little older and in the army, he reaches what passes for maturity in *Biloxi Blues* by losing his virginity, falling innocently in love, and learning that he is capable of moral cowardice and careless cruelty. If the last of these suggests seriousness of purpose, it lies in Simon's intentions, not in his achievement. Although Simon was in the army right after World War II (the play is set in 1943 with the war still there to devour or endanger his characters), nothing in the play seems to be built on observation. A barracks can be a forcing ground, as David Rabe used it in *Streamers*, but here, despite the intrusion of anti-Semitism and homosexuality, we are in *See Here, Private Hargrove* country. Simon recycles the usual army jokes (farts, smelly socks, latrine duty) and surrounds his ethnically mixed squad with the comforting presence of stereotypes like the tough sergeant and the whore with the heart of gold.

There was a kind of warmth in *Brighton Beach Memoirs* that made it likable despite (or perhaps because of) its bromides. For me, at least, *Biloxi Blues* is as charmless as *The Octette Bridge Club*. In P.J. Barry's play, which came and went quickly in March, the youngest of the eight sisters who make up the titular club belatedly (and with the help of a stay in a mental hospital) finds the strength to assert her own personality among her siblings. Her self-realization, like that of Eugene Morris Jerome, takes place amid the crackling of presumed comic lines. If *Blues* has the edge on *Club*, it is because the eight estimable actresses in the latter pretty much

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settled for *shtik* while the young performers in *Biloxi Blues* at least try to make characters out of the clichés they are asked to play.

Much more interesting are a couple of comedies about the dewimping of a wimp — Joseph Dougherty's *Digby* and Larry Shue's *The Foreigner*. Anthony Heald, who is fast becoming off-Broadway's most talented player of wimps, was the protagonist of both plays when I saw them, moving from *The Foreigner*, which is still running at the Astor Place Theatre, to the Manhattan Theatre Club for *Digby*. Neither of the plays is completely satisfying (how many plays are?), but they are more appealing than *Biloxi Blues* because each is built on a sound *suppose*. Suppose a young man, unhappy with contemporary sexual mores, chooses to become the friend of an attractive woman rather than another of her lovers. Suppose an excessively shy man passes himself off as a foreigner to avoid having to deal with other people, and his pretense not to understand English makes him privy to their secrets. These suppositions are as artificial as anything in *Biloxi Blues*, but they hold out the possibility of something more inventive than memories of *Mr. Roberts* or *At War with the Army*.

The obvious end of a play like *Digby* is that the hero and the heroine get together, and Dougherty promises the consummation of their love just beyond the final curtain. This conclusion would be more effective if Digby were to discover, to his surprise, that his philosophical objections to his society's sexual attitudes are both real and the cover for his own uncertainty in the face of a woman like Faye Greener. He lusts a little too ostentatiously here, which makes his antepenultimate rejection of her advances more morbid than comic, and she, less casual than compulsive about sex, seems an unlikely candidate for a conversion to romantic love — if that is what it is. One of Faye's lovers is a successful pop-porn artist, another a plasterer turned actor, but I am never certain that Dougherty wants his art jokes to make a thematic point about fashionable art and fashionable sex being equally empty. Nor is much done with the advertising world in which Digby makes his living. The strengths in Dougherty's play are the suggestions that Digby's behavior is the result of an oblique sense of superiority and that Faye's conventional sexual partners begin to doubt themselves faced with male behavior which they find inexplicable. Add that Dougherty has a talent for funny lines, most of which he gives to his not very wimpish wimp, and *Digby* can be seen not only as a reasonably amusing play but as the promise of more interesting work to come.

The Foreigner is the most bizarre of the plays under discussion because Shue puts his English hero in a Georgia fishing lodge which he must save from the machinations of a malevolent clergyman and the violence of his KKK associates. Shue's play, like Simon's, is designed to make a point about the connection between prejudice and ignorance, but Shue chooses to go the way of farce. His hero, freed of his sense of his own inadequacy, defeats the villain and gets the girl. But *The Foreigner* never even pretends to work in terms of character. It is easily the funniest of all the plays reviewed here, and its success lies in its nonsense language games, its mechanical tricks, above all its speed and timing. At a moment when sentimentality and preachiness leave so obvious an impress on comedy (see *Torch Song Trilogy* and *Isn't It Romantic* as well as the plays considered above), perhaps farce is the last, best refuge of the ugly duckling in search of swandom.

GERALD WEALES

Books: LIVING IN THE FINAL AGE

IN A DARK TIME
IMAGES FOR SURVIVAL
Edited by Robert Jay Lifton and Nicholas Humphrey
Harvard University,
$15, $5.95 paper, 150 pp.

LIVING WITH APOCALYPSE
SPIRITUAL RESOURCES FOR SOCIAL COMPASSION
Edited by Tilden H. Edwards
Harper & Row, $14.95, 200 pp.

Peggy Rosenthal

THESE two anthologies are motivated by the same question: how can we avoid nuclear holocaust? Both books take us a long way toward a helpful answer, by shifting the focus of analysis from Cold War politics and military strategy to human nature. Seeing the basic cause of war as the violence in our natures as human beings, both insist that our only real hope for preventing nuclear catastrophe lies in a radical transformation within each of us.

In a Dark Time begins the task of our transformation by transforming the anthology form itself. The selections are short (most about one-half page, none over two pages); they're designed to be, as the subtitle says, verbal images rather than extended arguments. Drawn from writings of various genres throughout Western history, the selections are juxtaposed so as to present ways we have seen such subjects as war, apocalypse, despair, free choice. The juxtapositions are stimulating, and parts of the book would work well as dramatic readings by anti-war groups. More important, the book's form does appeal to that human faculty in which the editors place much of their hope: the imagination. Their hope is that if we imagine clearly and concretely the dark deeds of which we're capable and especially the terrible destructiveness of nuclear war, we'll be repelled, and then the bright side of our imaginations will rise to the occasion and to our rescue.

Images of our inner darkness therefore predominate. The editors, both distinguished psychologists, are superb at showing how we tend to twist language into lies even to ourselves; to picture

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people we feel threatened by as subhuman ("that moron!" "that beast!") so that we can kill them; to fantasize self-destruction so effectively that we bring it about; to cause our own death merely by the power of our despair. The persuasiveness of this cumulative picture of the forces of darkness in our psyches presents a problem, though: the forces of hope we're offered at the end of the book just don't seem strong enough, by comparison, to count on. Suddenly at the end we're being called to "believe in," to put all our faith in, our humanness (human reason, conscience, free will, "human solidarity," "human imagination") — after we've been persuaded that our humanness is a pretty depressing and destructive thing.

Living with Apocalypse puts its faith elsewhere: in God. This isn't remarkable, nor is the book's form; it's a collection of essays by well-known writers on spirituality, commissioned by the director of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation. What's radical about the book is its conviction that our hope for averting nuclear catastrophe lies in contemplative prayer. The book's best essays, especially those by Parker J. Palmer and Gerald G. May, are as good as Merton's writings at explaining the link between contemplative prayer and the social compassion that would keep us from mass murder: contemplative prayer is the action of longing for one's heart to be opened to the gift of God's love; this love, when we allow it to fill our heart, spills out into love for all people, including our "enemies"; and loving our enemies with God's love, we can't possibly consider bombing them. Nuclear weapons themselves are therefore, appropriately, scarcely mentioned in the book.

Of course really opening one's heart to God's love is probably the hardest thing in the world to do. While some of the book's contributors show deep understanding of the difficulty, many settle for oversimplifications: promoting certain prayer *techniques*, and slipping easily into jargon ("faith development," "Kingdom-conscious community," "parenting dynamics" in the Holy Family). Such short-cuts of heart and mind are not, alas, the way to the "spiritual revolution" which — according to the editor (and to many other people, including the pope) — is the only thing "that can save us."

Living With Apocalypse would have benefited from *In a Dark Time*'s sensitivity to language and patience with complexity. And *In a Dark Time* would have benefited from the recognition of our spiritual needs which is the basic assumption of *Living with Apocalypse*. The implicit assumption of *In a Dark Time* is the secular humanist one that God is not a living reality. The editors therefore feel free (or, really, bound) to cut God out of their understanding, as they do literally in one case. They give, as a complete selection, Deuteronomy 30:19, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." This suggests, in conformity with the book's rational humanist conclusion, that we can just "*choose* life," and we'll *have* it. But the sentence in Deuteronomy continues; "may live, in the love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, clinging to him; for in this your life consists. . . ." The spiritual meaning of life has simply been cut out of the passage.

But simply to proclaim the spiritual meaning and to assert that our life is in God doesn't solve our problems either, as the deficiencies of *Living with Apocalypse* demonstrate. What we need is better understanding of the complexities of our life — in both its psychological and spiritual dimensions — and each of these books does make an important contribution toward this end. "Peace must begin within our hearts. A heart torn by the violence of sin and hatred will never create peace." This statement from *Living with Apocalypse* has practically become a cliché of Christian peacemaking, but it's true nonetheless. The great contribution of *In a Dark Time* is to show us in terrible detail what our torn-up heart looks like; *Living with Apocalypse*, at its best, then shows us what's required to heal it.

A place in the suburbs

LINDEN HILLS
Gloria Naylor
Ticknor & Fields, $16.95, 320 pp.

Robert Jones

FOR the women who live on Brewster Place, Linden Hills rises above their dead-end street as a dream to be achieved. Linden Hills may be indistinguishable from any colorless, American suburb, but it flaunts everything that has been denied to those exiled from the standard baggage and measure of middle-class success. Gloria Naylor has not given the name of a place to her two novels accidentally. She understands the ways in which geography infiltrates the mind and how our identification with a particular landscape determines our understanding of ourselves and our connection to a history.

Few histories have been as psychically linked to the land as ours. To a large degree, our spirit of omnipotence and invincibility as a culture cannot be separated from the belief that the land will never run out. There will always be room to breathe and an opportunity for limitless growth. Our conception of the past and presumption of freedom for the unwavering, individual "I," are so grounded in an idea of vast and infinite space, that it doesn't matter if we now have diminished territories to conquer. Even places that have failed, like the ghost towns of California and Nevada, are predicated on this belief in expansion. These jinxed, desert towns stay in our memory as monuments to an eternal faith in the possibility of renewal, the belief that when the water runs dry or the gold disappears, we can begin again somewhere else. Geographical memory feeds our most potent legends and self-understanding and makes the country, even at its most desolate outposts, perpetually seem to be the isolate land of promise.

But these myths of origin and development are always the property of the

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sovereign culture. Gloria Naylor writes of ghost towns of another variety, for when she looks to the past, it is to a history of exclusion rather than promise. The urban graveyards of Brewster Place have not been deserted by settlers, but abandoned by hope. Brewster Place lies at the end of a city; its inhabitants live on the outskirts of history. When Naylor's characters speak of the past, it is always in terms of family, never in terms of a larger, cultural tradition. The family is what they remember and the history of which they are part. It is not the memory of a historical past shared by the culture encircling them.

In *Black Boy,* Richard Wright said, "when I thought of the essential bleakness of black life in America, I knew that Negroes had never been allowed to catch the full spirit of western civilization, that somehow they lived in it but not of it." Naylor is a generation forty years subsequent to Wright's. Her vision is of the aftershocks of assimilation and the double-loss it entails: the forfeiture by black Americans of a tenuous sense of a distinct past for the doubts and failings inherent in the world to which they so long dreamed of belonging.

Both of Naylor's novels concern the death of remembrance. In "A Sketch of the Past," Virginia Woolf defined memory as the base upon which all of experience rests, the tie that binds all impressions and ideas, all life, to a context. It is this memorial event which allows meaning to unfold and enables us to imagine a future as we attempt to make sense of the past. Understanding is remembrance, and the greatest novels of this century, Proust's *La Recherche du Temps Perdu,* Andrey Biely's *St. Petersburg,* Woolf's *The Waves,* all reconstruct a past as the present recedes into diffusion and meaninglessness. Self-knowledge is made possible only by memory. This idea is integral to Dante and, before him, to Augustine, for only in memory can we glimpse the possibility of eternity. Memory sets you free.

In *Linden Hills,* Naylor recreates Dante's city of Dis in *The Inferno* in an American suburb. Her meaning is founded on the same sense of damnation that overwhelmed Dante's journey into hell. Dis is Lucifer's city, the place of souls turned against themselves, those damned for ill-will, corruption of the spirit, and the perversion of social good for self-dreaming and glory. At the end of *The Women of Brewster Place,* Naylor says that a street dies when it becomes lost to memory. Her characters are bereft of any link to a past or to a place that allows them to imagine an end to their exile, so they suffer oblivion. In the ghetto of Brewster Place, the physical destruction is the secondary, or at least the parallel, move. The lives as well as the homes come tumbling down together. In *Linden Hills,* Naylor brings us into the world to which the residents of Brewster Place aspired, and shows us that it too is a place of dead roads.

As Lester Tilson and Willie Mason stroll down the crescent drives of Linden Hills to the home of its ancestral founder, Luther Needed, we experience an unnerving sense of a culture gone out of control. It is the province of Lacan's *ça parle*: the voice of a culture that jabbers noisily at its people as they search in vain for meaning. *It speaks*: language simply goes on; the meanings embedded in the encompassing world generate their own life and we find ourselves in society after-the-fact. Naylor's vision is uniquely modern in its depiction of culture as something independent to the lives struggling to adjust to its advancement.

> *They sat frozen on the bed, waiting for it to come again, and when it snaked through the open window, Lester and Willie forced themselves not to reach out and touch each other. They each sat alone in the dark, trying to link some sort of human emotion to that sound because an ancient instinct told them it wasn't an animal sending out that cry into the world. They knew it didn't sound like someone in pain or danger. And it didn't echo the heightened edges of despair. Lester and Willie were totally confused, since there was really nothing that had touched their twenty years to help them locate its cause – they had not lived long enough to recognize a plea for lost time.*
>
> —Gloria Naylor
> *Linden Hills*

For Naylor, damnation begins with the loss of memory of origins. *Linden Hills* is about the fallacy of independence and the seduction of will-lessness and forgetfulness. The loss of memory engenders the loss of will, and both precurse the slide into oblivion. As Lester and Willie make their descent, Luther's wife, Willa, lies locked in a basement as punishment for her husband's paranoia. Willa gradually unearths relics of past Needed women driven mad as she is now. . . . Luwana Packerville, Evelyn Creton Needed. There is an elegiac quality in these passages that is unrivaled in contemporary fiction. In the litany of the dead's secrets, Naylor bears witness to the possibility that we can disappear without a trace and be trampled unnoticed by a culture we have set in motion and are powerless to stop.

Tales of the American dream gone sour have become a truism in cultural criticism and a genre-unto-itself in twentieth-century fiction. We are possibly the most self-critical civilization in history. Almost as soon as America created itself, its literature cast a stern eye toward its progress and predicted its decline. Especially in the present age, no "serious" writer earns his or her credentials without lamenting our lost innocence and our fall from grace. We have become so accustomed to hearing of our lemming-like plunge into futility, that despair has lost its affect. Naylor understands the contagion of an imaginative lack and our susceptibility to hopelessness. But her work diverges from fashionable, nihilistic novels in its evocation of the cruelty culture inflicts on all of its missing persons and the damnation awaiting those of us who automatically follow its course.

In John Ciardi's translation of *The Inferno*, Dante hears the anguish of hell's dead spirits and asks:

Master, what shades are these who lie buried in these chests and fill the air

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with such a painful and unending cry? Willa Needed's cries haunt Lester's and Willie's walk through Linden Hills. In Willa, Naylor echoes the bewilderment of those who unwittingly lost their way and find themselves deceived by a life they never imagined having. And who, at their moment of starkest reflection, cannot remember how any of it began or how they have come so far.

An enduring voice & vocation

DOROTHY DAY AND THE CATHOLIC WORKER

Nancy L. Roberts

State University of New York, $36.50, $12.95 paper, 226 pp.

Mel Piehl

JOURNALISTICALLY as well as ideologically the *Catholic Worker* has been a blend of *The Masses, I.F. Stone's Weekly, Commonweal, The Wanderer,* and *St. Anthony's Messenger*. That is the major conclusion of this study of the little monthly paper, price 1¢, that has had such an extraordinary impact on American Catholicism and on many outside the church as well.

Nancy Roberts, a journalism professor at the University of Minnesota, recounts the basic Catholic Worker story, but with attention focused primarily on the *CW*'s monthly tabloid, and on Dorothy Day's role as its longtime editor. Roberts has no trouble showing that, considered simply as a journalistic enterprise, the *Catholic Worker* owed its success to Dorothy Day's personal efforts. Especially in the early days, she "chose the news, wrote the copy, and composed the editorials," eventually chalking up, by Roberts' count, more than a thousand signed essays, articles, and reviews, plus more to which she did not attach her name. This tremendous output depended not only on her legendary capacity for hard work, but on an old-time journalist's skills. One of her editors in the thirties and forties "often observed Day at the printer's where, he remembered, 'if we were short of copy, she'd pound out copy to fill the space. She was like a machine gun — she could write just like that.'"

Although she is now better known for other things, Roberts correctly points out that Dorothy Day was first of all a journalist, and that she always considered writing her primary vocation. The book

REVIEWERS

PEGGY ROSENTHAL *is the author of* Words and Values *(Oxford University Press).*

ROBERT JONES *works for a major publisher in New York City.*

MEL PIEHL *teaches humanities and history in Christ College at Valparaiso University in Indiana. He is the author of* Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America.

JAMES R. ZAZZALI *is a former attorney general of the State of New Jersey.*

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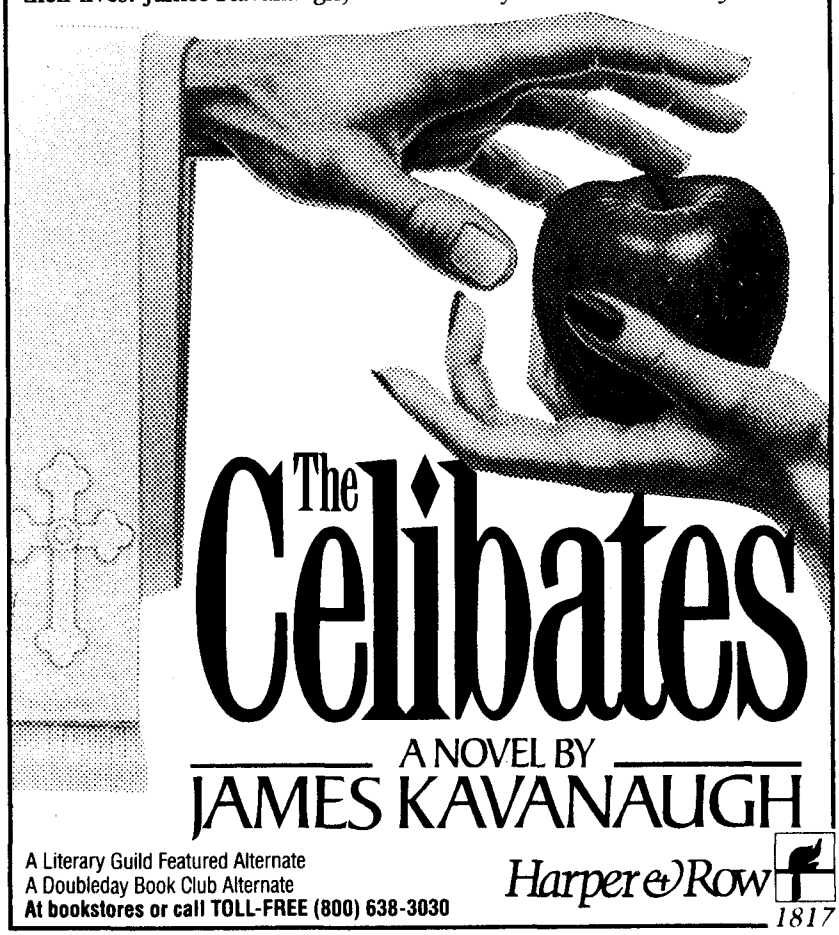

The Celibates

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does a fine job of locating Day and the *Catholic Worker* within the tradition of "advocacy journalism" that runs backward from the thirties' labor journalism through the muckrakers to idiosyncratic nineteenth-century editors, and forward to the "new journalism" of the 1960s. As Roberts notes, such journalism tends to appear in times of crisis, and to be characterized more by social commitment than by the usual journalistic objectives.

But Roberts also points out that, unlike most advocacy journalism, the *Catholic Worker* did not sacrifice moral or intellectual standards in order to promote its causes, and emphasized positive solutions to social problems rather than simply negative protest. "When some early would-be contributors suggested 'bitter drawings' for the paper, according to *Catholic Worker* illustrator Ade Bethune, Dorothy Day demurred. . . . 'There's enough bitterness, anger and sarcasm in the world,' Day told Bethune, 'without emphasizing it.'"

Dorothy Day's ability to avoid the typical pitfalls of advocacy journalism helped create a unique publication that somehow combined a broad interest in social questions, the everyday concerns of its writers and readers, and an emphasis on Catholic thought and tradition. Through a detailed "content analysis," Roberts demonstrates numerically what more intuitive readers have guessed: that the *Catholic Worker* has remained almost incredibly consistent in editorial content as well as ideology over more than fifty years. While there have naturally been some topical variations with the times, the mix of social justice reporting, pacifism, personal and movement writing, and spiritual material has remained more or less the same, and seems to exert much the same appeal on the *Catholic Worker*'s 100,000 current readers.

By carrying the story up to the present day, Roberts also stresses the continuity of the *Catholic Worker* since the death of Dorothy Day (though a recent decision to use a computer in mailing the paper has prompted a typical Catholic Worker discussion of technology and justice). In its conclusion on the *Catholic Worker*'s place in journalism, as elsewhere, the book tends to slight other features of the movement. Roberts is aware that the Catholic Worker is more than a paper, but her focus sometimes leads to a greater concern with the method of presenting the *CW*'s ideas than with their content.

Nevertheless, this work contains more valuable evidence of the singular power of that little paper that first hit the streets of New York on May Day fifty-two years ago. Happily, it is still going on.

While Day sometimes seemed acutely sensitive to criticism of her own work, expressing her hurt feelings plainly, she could also bear censure graciously. Sullivan recalled how Day was "rankled" when the Rev. Hans A. Reinhold gave her autobiography a mixed review in Commonweal. *The priest found* The Long Loneliness *"a bit weary, disenchanted, repetitious, rather too meditative." Such remarks, Sullivan observed, were bound to "sting" one as "sensitive" as Day. But when Father Reinhold came to St. Joseph's a few days later to make peace, she never indicated her displeasure. Day "just sat down there and talked with him very pleasantly."*

– Nancy L. Roberts
Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker

A man for many seasons

THOMAS MORE
A BIOGRAPHY
Richard Marius
Knopf, $22.95, 562 pp.

James R. Zazzali

IT is fifty years since Thomas More was canonized, and fifty years since the last major biography. Although he has not fallen into oblivion, one recalls that at a Jesuit retreat house in New Jersey, where a reproduction of Holbein's portrait of More hangs, a retreatant was once heard to ask: "Is that the guy who owns this house?" A play and a movie parted the curtains to give the public the saint and star. Richard Marius, head of the Expository Writing Program at Harvard College and an editor of the *Yale Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, now gives us the soul.

Marius takes us through More's life with absorbing detail: the early years, his family, his relationship with Erasmus, the twin influences of the Renaissance and the embryonic Reformation, the writings, the persecution of heretics, the chancellorship, imprisonment, and death. If any criticism can be leveled, it is the book's suffocating under the weight of More's own books. Perhaps half the biography deals with his works, with four chapters on *Utopia* alone. Partly because of this, the reading at times can be both difficult and tedious. (The effort is relieved when we are fed fillips such as an explanation for the French phrase *trente-et-un*: Italian authorities punished convicted prostitutes by finding a band of ruffians and ordering them to rape the convicted prostitute thirty-one times).

More is quickened by the deft hand of the novelist, which Marius also happens to be. The introduction, final chapters, and epilogue make intense reading. We see the real and flawed More, not the paper saint but the man split by doubt and conflict, the early friend and later antagonist of Henry, and the persecutor/prosecutor, happy over the death of Protestant heretics but, unlike many of his contemporaries, never hostile in word or deed to any Jew. We see the humanist, capable of great love and great hate, and the consummate actor-politician all the time professing humility. His contradictions and flaws are substantial, "and at times they make him a disappointing hero." One contemporary asked whether he was "a foolish wise man or a wise foolish man?" Neither or both? Withal, his ambivalence and ambiguity ceded to conviction when the time came to embrace his king and reject his principles.

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He said no to the king — and yes to the scaffold. His decision is all the more gripping since he could have cured his conundrum by a concession, acceptable to the realm, family, and friends, but anathema to him. This devout and divided man chose conscience over conciliation, principle over peace, for he was "the king's good servant but God's first."

What lessons emerge for twentieth-century pilgrims? On both a policy and personal level, many. The primary public concern today is the evil wrought whenever the state dominates a church (or vice-versa) or when the relationship between the two institutions becomes too close. One studies More with a curious sense of *déjà vu* as we recall Becket, a familiar story but worth the retelling because of the parallels. Almost four centuries before, Becket, also known as a reformer and remembered for the manner of his death, a chancellor like More, companion to another Henry, and likewise summoned to answer trumped-up charges, took issue with his king's dominion over the church. Irritated by the defiance of that Thomas, a "single insolent prelate," Henry's henchmen murdered Becket, although there will always be doubt about the extent of Henry's culpability. Little wonder that the name Thomas derives from the Hebrew word for twin, for Becket and More are history's twin martyrs to the principle of spiritual independence.

Various reviews of Marius's work make much of its iconoclasm, and of its evidence that More possessed large warts and small virtues. The faults are clearly there and deserve the critical analysis Marius provides. Even the praise is sometimes faint. But some of Marius's judgments have been overstated by others. A perceptive review in the *New York Review of Books* by G.R. Elton, the distinguished professor of history at Cambridge University, is a case in point. To start, it features a large sketch of a sinister-looking More, complete with bulbous nose and ermine robes, saying the rosary in a way no other portraitist has depicted him in picture or print. More as *bête noire*. Who would turn to him to buy an indulgence then or a used car now? Elton then tells us that Marius "manifestly doesn't like More all that well . . . ." But Marius starts his study by telling us in the introduction to *More* that "We all end by liking him." In his epilogue he concludes by calling More "an indomitable symbol" and notes that "few have known him well without feeling a heart lift up to what he was . . . an indispensable ideal we cherish for ourselves." Finally, if Marius "manifestly doesn't like More all that well," why does he have a print of More on his study wall?

Marius does not remove More's halo; he only dims it. More was flawed and, in the judgment of history and even hagiography, that is as it must be. But it is to be remembered that the principled saint was also the public servant. The latter is perceived to be the most imperfect institution — government. He must try to overcome, yet sometimes succumbs to, "those daily compromises which chip away at character," to borrow Vannevar Bush's phrase. As Marius recognizes, More did not compromise on the most critical question of all, his convictions. He gave his life for them. In this centrifugal time, clergymen and politicians do not do that much anymore, for faith or party.

If the author dissects More with a scholar's scalpel, he does so fairly. The saint remains, injured but intact. As Marius concludes in this the best biography we now have on More and his times, "Erasmus a long time ago called him a man for all seasons, and so he has been and so he will remain."

Correspondence

(Continued from page 258)

the Vatican Museum? Christ founded a church, not a museum! What would the church say to a father who let his children starve while he kept valuable family treasures in his house? We do not honor him with art treasures, nor with the gold and gems from the earth, but with hearts of gold and gems of the spirit.

EILEEN M. RUTH

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Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

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This first May issue serves as a good sample of the range and timeliness typical of the good reading *Commonweal* provides its subscribers, issue after issue. Articles like the following from recent issues supply further evidence.

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